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THE TIMES

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SATURDAY DECEMBER 20 1997

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Homes-for-votes affair

Porter is ordered to repay £27m

By MARK HENDERSON

THE High Court branded Dame Shirley Porter and a former colleague liars yesterday as it upheld a £27 million surcharge imposed by the district auditor in the Westminster City Council homes-for-votes affair.

The court ruled that John Magill, the Westminster district auditor, had acted lawfully and correctly when ordering the repayment from Dame Shirley. Conservative council leader at the time, and her deputy David Weeks. Mr Magill found them guilty of wilful misconduct in 1996 for masterminding a gerrymandering exercise to protect a slender Tory majority by selling discounted council flats in marginal wards.

Two council officers and a third councillor who had also been surcharged were cleared of wilful misconduct and had repayment orders quashed. There was also scathing criticism of the length and the cost of the inquiry, the way Mr Magill had been empowered to investigate and judge the case and some of his methods.

"I was going to get her socks, but I think she'd prefer the money!"

Homes for votes, page 10

Flyaway holidays start

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

THE longest Christmas began last night with record numbers of passengers flying off for a seasonal break, and the start of a holiday traffic build-up as many began a two-week holiday.

The exodus is the result of Christmas Eve arriving sympathetically in mid-week, and many saving part of their annual leave to bridge the gaps between this weekend and Monday, January 5.

Heathrow declared yesterday its busiest day of the year with 180,000 passengers. In

the next two weeks 2.3 million travellers are expected to pass through the airport.

British Airways, which expects a bumper Christmas with half a million passengers, said the most popular destinations include India, South Africa, Kenya, Belfast, Edinburgh, Manchester and Glasgow. The airline will serve traditional Christmas fare on flights, including a total of 50,000 turkey dinners and 60,000 mince pies.

Travellers will be leaving behind mostly mild but unseasonal weather, according to the London Weather Centre, and

little prospect of a white Christmas. Although drivers experienced heavy traffic on the motorways and roads leading out of the cities last night, AA Roadwatch said the traffic peak would probably not be reached until Tuesday.

The CBI said that while it made sense for manufacturing industry to shut down for much of the season, the retail, service and hospitality sectors would remain hard at work. A spokesman said: "We should like to dispel the myth that Britain closes down."

Forecast, page 24

England take cricket trophy

English cricket received a timely fillip before their trip to the West Indies in the New Year when Adam Hollioake's one-day side won the Champions' Trophy in Sharjah yesterday by beating West Indies by three wickets. England were sent home by Graham Thorpe and Matthew Fleming who made 70 in less than seven overs. Page 29

Three Britons on board crashed jet

Three Britons were on board a jet which crashed in Indonesia yesterday with the loss of all 104 passengers and crew. The Foreign Office said two male and one female British national were on the SilkAir Boeing 737, which went down in a marshy area on the island of Sumatra. The flight, number MI185, was bound from Jakarta to Singapore.

Tunnel deal

Eurotunnel struck an agreement with the British and French governments to operate the Channel Tunnel until 2086, extending the franchise from 2052. The move ends uncertainty over Eurotunnel's long-term prospects...Page 23

THE SATURDAY TIMES Bigger and Better

The best for business and best for personal finance

BUSINESS

Today the best City pages report on the MNC verdict on the travel industry

Starting Page 22
with share prices

WEEKEND MONEY

The award-winning team on how to set up an off-shore trust - and your questions about leases

In section 2
with unit trust prices

VISUAL

Full guide to two weeks of holiday TV and radio

metro

CDs and books of the year

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Stunning gain for Hague as Tories hail new first lady

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM and Ffion Hague flew out of Britain last night to a honeymoon hideaway after a traditional wedding ceremony in the crypt chapel at the Palace of Westminster.

The couple made only one brief public appearance together at a photo call at the entrance to the House of Commons. They were applauded by hundreds of well-wishers when they kissed four times for the benefit of the cameras.

With the new Mrs Hague radiating the glamour qualities which the Tory leadership lacks, a clearly proud Mr Hague shouted: "Doesn't she look beautiful?"

No one disagreed. The bride was stunning in a figure-hugging sheath dress with a draped neckline, draped cloak, and short train. The dress had been one of the best kept secrets in politics. Even the groom had been denied the name of its designer. It was made by Neil Cunningham, the young Londoner who created the much discussed black lace dress which she wore to the Tory Party conference.

The former civil servant, 29, maintained an old bridal tradition. She kept Mr Hague waiting 10 minutes in the 15th-century Gothic chapel of St Mary Undercroft. She arrived at 2.10pm. They were declared man and wife at 2.35pm.

The bride, who had been whisked into the Palace of Westminster at 9am to avoid a media scrum, made the short walk to the chapel through Westminster Hall with her father, Emrys, on her arm. She carried a bouquet of white

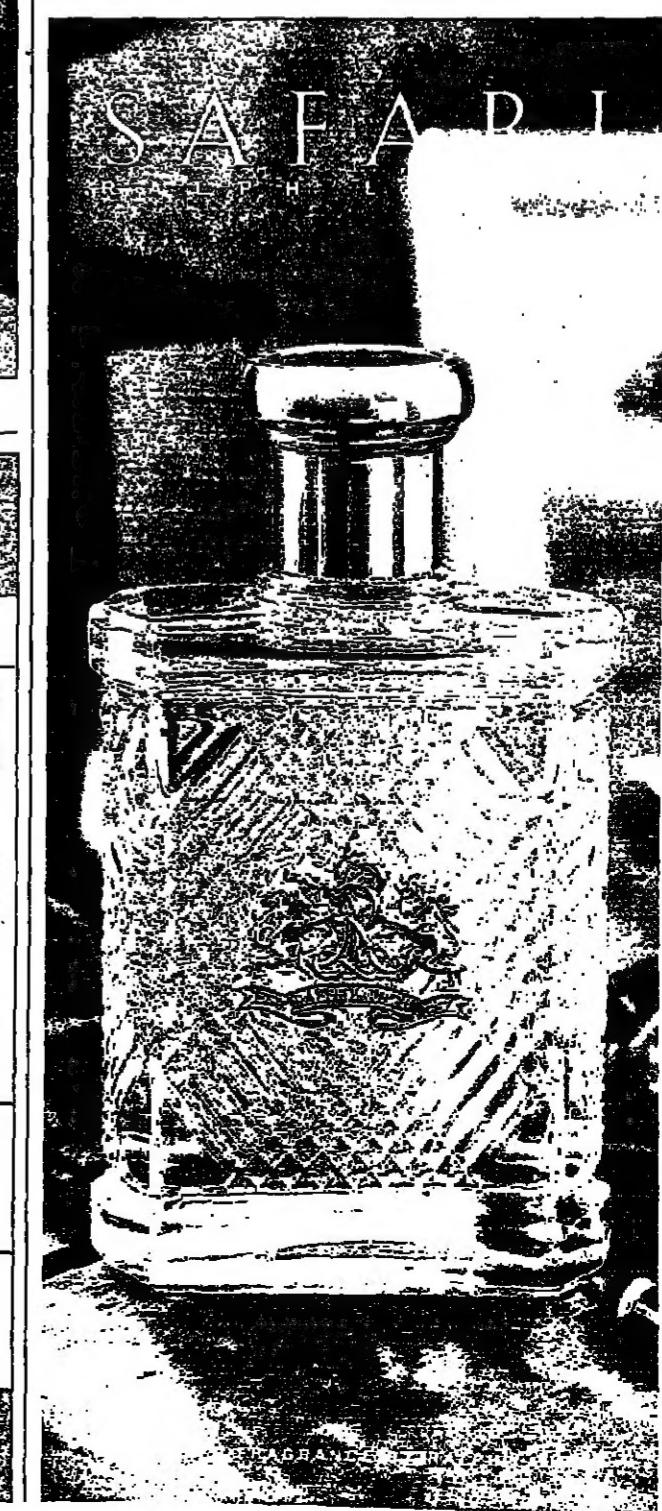
lilies and red roses, which had been cut from her native Wales on Thursday. Mr Jenkins beamed with pride and his eyes glistened as his daughter was spontaneously applauded by Commons staff who had waited for up to an hour to try to catch a glimpse of the new first lady of the Tory Party.

They were accompanied by her elder sister, Dr Manon Williams, a private secretary to the Prince of Wales, who was the matron of honour, and her four-year-old daughter, Indeg, the bridesmaid. Indeg held grimly on to her mother's hand as she followed her aunt into the chapel.

Mr Hague took no chances on the timing. He was in place at 1.32pm, only 30 minutes after the last anti-terrorist police sniffer dogs had left. He wore a morning suit, paisley-patterned purple silk waistcoat, and yellow tie, which were made for him by the London tailor David Millings. The outfit was a gift from a group of his friends. He had a white rose boutonniere in honour of his native Yorkshire.

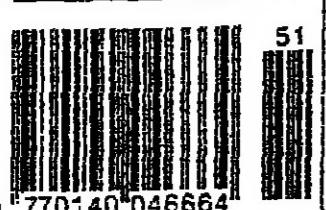
As Mr Hague walked through the Commons the name Mr Love flashed up on a Commons screen above his head. Andrew Love, the Labour MP for Edmonton, had begun a speech in the Commons chamber. "It is a good omen," said Nick Levy, 31, a Brussels-based lawyer, who was relaxed and smiling.

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GP code reveals hard cases

By IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

PATIENTS have been given a new insight into the codes used by GPs to warn colleagues about difficult customers. Strange initials on medical notes have little to do with patients' physical conditions and a lot to do with what their doctor thinks of them.

Many people have become TATT, or tired all the time. A young mother who comes in

fussing over a child is an OAP — not a pensioner but an over-anxious parent. A hypochondriac is given the TEETH treatment (tried everything else, try homoeopathy).

In the accident and emergency department a casually admitted as PARO — pissed and fell over. Some may be classified as SIGs — stroppy ignorants.

The secret code has been leaked by Phil Hammond, a GP and lecturer in community at Bristol University.

Bridgwater, just as NFA in Winchester stands for normal for Andover.

Young male doctors may also be heard boasting among their colleagues about how many TUBEs they have performed on female patients. This is not a difficult throat operation but a totally unnecessary breast examination.

The secret code has been leaked by Phil Hammond, a GP and lecturer in community at Bristol University.

HAGUE-O!

AFTER A HECTIC YEAR AT WESTMINSTER

THE WEDDING OF FFION JENKINS TO WILLIAM HAGUE, LEADER OF HER MAJESTY'S OPPOSITION



William Hague and his entourage, including senior aide and usher Sebastian Coe, in whose Guildford house the bridegroom spent his last night as a single man, stride purposefully towards his date in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft. The couple were pronounced man and wife in the 13th century House of Commons crypt at 2.38pm. Mr Hague later confessed that the exchanging of the vows in Welsh and English had been more nerve-racking than preparing to give a Commons speech.



Mr Hague's parents, Nigel and Stella, above; and his sister, Mrs Jane MacCaw, left, were among family members at the service. The bride's father, Emrys, walked up the aisle with his daughter, watched by her mother, Myra, with whom she had spent the night in Mr Hague's Dolphin Square flat.



ORDER OF SERVICE

Order of Service of the marriage of William Jefferson Hague and Ffion Llywelyn Jenkins

Entry of the bride to the music of *The Hornpipe* from Handel's Water Music

The first hymn, *Blaenwern*, which was sung in Welsh

Opening prayers

Reading by Dewi Thomas, a friend of the bride's family

Psalm 23, arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams, sung by Jeremy Huw Williams, brother-in-law of the bride

Reading by Robert Godber, Mr Hague's former politics teacher

Marriage service conducted by the Rev Cymwl Williams and Dr Donald Gray, the Speaker's chaplain

Gabriel Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* sung by the choir of St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey

The hymn *Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer*

The blessing by the Rev Cymwl Williams

Signing of the register, to the accompaniment of Mozart's *Laurea Dominum*, Dilys Elwyn Edwards' *Greensleeves* and Bruckner's *Canticus Fatus Est*

The wedding procession to the strains of a fanfare by William Mathias

IN SICKNESS & IN WEALTH

Tradition rules as Tory first couple make vows

Continued from page 1
years had risen at 5am at the home of Sebastian Coe, the Olympic double medallist who is his chief of staff, to drive to New Covent Garden flower market. He was clearly nervous. He downed two pints of Ruddles bitter with the market traders shortly after he arrived at 6.45am.

Mr Hague, who had to exchange his vows in Welsh and English, said: "I am more nervous about my vows than Prime Minister's Question Time. It is a great feeling to wake up on your wedding day — provided she turns up."

Mr Hague later went to the Carlton Club, the bastion of the Tory establishment, for brunch with his ushers. The celebrations began early. The Tory leader tucked into smoked salmon and scrambled egg washed down by champagne and 1961 Claret, to mark the year he was born. The festivities were interrupted briefly by telephone calls from Baroness Thatcher and John Major.

Then Mr Hague, flanked by his ushers, walked through St James's Park to the House of Commons. Traffic ground to a halt, taxis honked their horns, and cameras flashed.

The bride, who had spent the previous evening with family at the couple's flat in

west London, was more low profile. She was whisked through Commons corridors to Mr Hague's suite of offices to change.

Clive Lever, her hairdresser from the Michaeljahn salon in Mayfair, whose clients include Lady Thatcher, arrived mid-morning.

One custom was rejected. Because she was not superstitious she declined to wear "something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue".

The bride, who had spent the previous evening with family at the couple's flat in

London, was more low profile. She was whisked through Commons corridors to Mr Hague's suite of offices to change.

When she set finally set foot in the chapel, which was festooned with white roses and lilies and illuminated by dozens of flickering candles, every head turned. As she walked up the aisle to the strains of the *Hornpipe* from Handel's *Water Music* Mr Hague's face broke into a big smile. They held hands at the altar.

Canon Donald Gray, the Speaker's Chaplain, and Rev Cymwl Williams, a family friend of the bride's, officiated at the 32-minute service which was conducted in English and Welsh. English was spoken first.

Canon Donald Gray, the Speaker's Chaplain, and Rev Cymwl Williams, a family friend of the bride's, officiated at the 32-minute service which was conducted in English and Welsh. English was spoken first.

The bride chose not to take a vow of obedience while the groom declared he would: "Love, honour and protect her." Mr Hague spoke impeccable Welsh which was just as well. It was when Miss Jenkins taught him the words of the national anthem in her mother tongue that their friendship blossomed when he was Welsh Secretary.

No details were released of the readings but Tory officials confirmed that they were not biblical. They also omitted a sermon.

The haunting Psalm 23, arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams, was sung by Jeremy Huw Williams, the brother-in-law of the bride and a noted Welsh tenor. The voices of the choir of St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, soared to the rafters of the ornate chapel during the singing of *Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer*.

They exchanged wedding rings made of Welsh gold and were pronounced man and wife after they had said "Gwnan" — Welsh for "I do".

A champagne reception was held at the Speaker's state apartments and dinner was held in the MPs' dining room.

The couple left shortly before 8pm on a candlelit motor launch on the Thames which took them to Battersea heliport, from where they were due to be flown to Heathrow. They are thought to have spent the night in a European capital before heading for a honeymoon in exotic Indian locations. But no one was telling. They could have been anywhere. "It will be romantic but secret," a Tory official said.

Designer plays it straight for effect

BY KATHERINE BERGEN

THE bride stood by another man yesterday. Although her supposedly electrifying £2,000 black lace frock failed to light up the Tory party conference in Blackpool, Ffion Jenkins stayed true to Neil Cunningham, its designer.

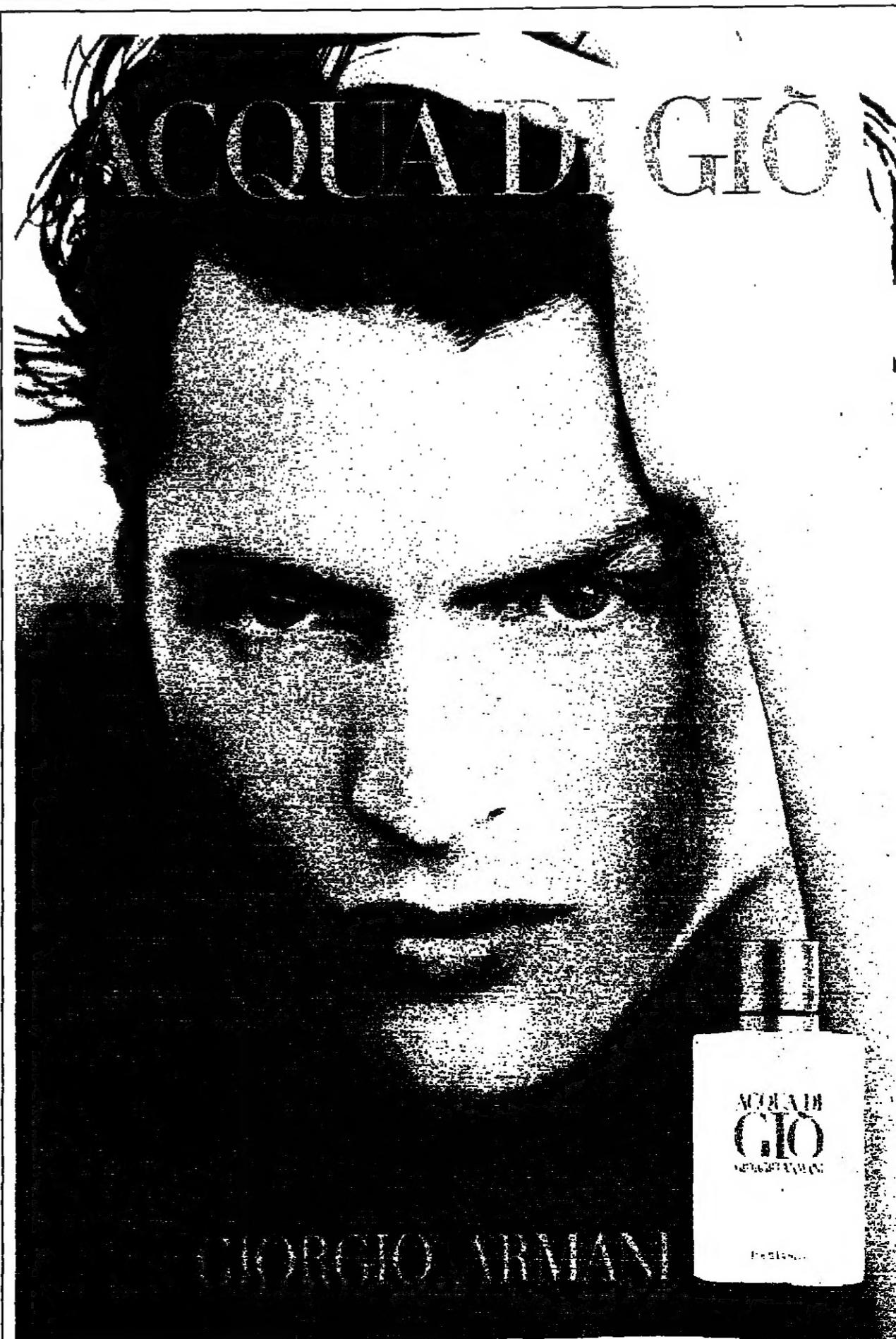
Yesterday he was hoping for better reviews as he turned her out in a classical close-fitting bridal gown of ivory silk crepe with a draped neckline. This was complemented by a full-length tulip veil bunched at the crown of her head and flowing to the floor.

Figure-hugging, low-cut, buttoned down the back and with a 2ft fish-tail train, it was

a sophisticated dress, the sort seen at smart London weddings.

Christine Prunty, editor of *Wedding and Home* magazine, said that the new Mrs Hague had gone for "less is more" and that she had been quite daring. "She didn't wear any jewellery."

Fittings at Mr Cunningham's shop just off Regent Street were convivial affairs, according to the designer. "Ffion did bring her mother and sister to fittings, of which there were three or four over about three months. We used to all have a cup of tea together."



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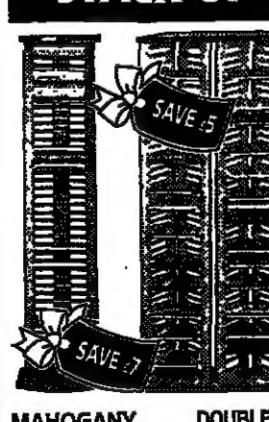
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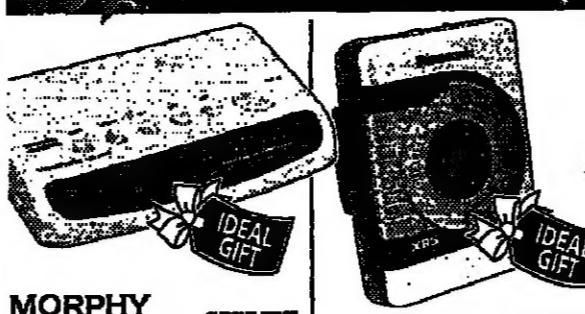
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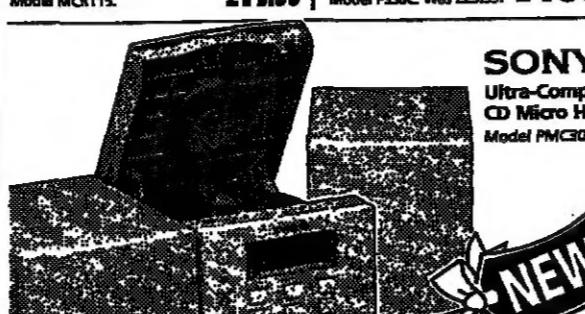
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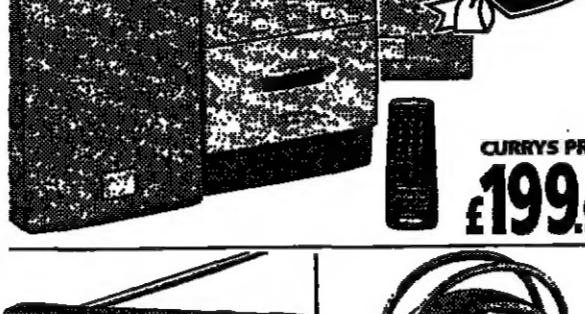
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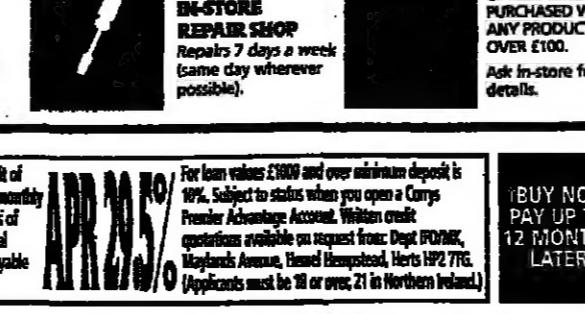
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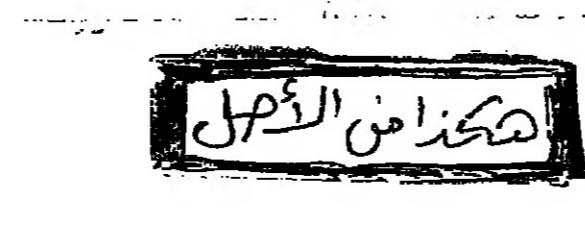
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24 HOUR HELPL

Tragedy at the top of the world

A spectacular record of an expedition to film Everest tells how the movie crew turned rescue party on a day when eight climbers lost their lives.

Bronwen Maddox writes



A partial cadaver, which had lain on the slopes for several years, was consigned to a crevasse

Eighteen months ago a team of internationally renowned climbers and photographers set off on an expedition never before attempted: to bring back footage, shot in the spectacular Imax format, of climbing the world's highest mountain.

In Imax format is clear. In Imax cinemas, audiences are surrounded by six channels of synchronised digital sound, and scenes are projected at ten times the resolution of a standard feature film on screens up to eight storeys tall and 100ft wide. "Just as the wide screen of Cinemascope

They succeeded, and the result is a stunning set of photographs published this month, to be followed by their film *Everest* in the spring. But they also found themselves witnesses to the tragedy of May 10, 1996, one of the greatest disasters in the history of assaults on Everest, when eight climbers died in a single day.

wide screen or Cinemascope was perfect for the landscapes of the westerns of the 1950s, the more vertical ratio aspect of *imax* is perfect for *Everest*," one of the film-makers said.

In other words, the shots show just how disorientingly high the Himalayas are, in a way which the now-familiar triumphant shots from the narrow platform of the summit do not. In the pictures, the

single day.

Having spent nearly \$750,000 (£470,000) and two months dragging their equipment and 75 precious oxygen cylinders into place for a dash to the summit, they felt obliged to throw their resources into the rescue effort. Their contribution, confirmed in other accounts of that terrible 36 hours, did not in the end prevent them reaching the summit, but is a sombre and irresistibly gripping thread through their account of what it feels like to reach the very

It do not. In the pictures, the human figures are terrifyingly small, crawling up gleaming sheets of ice.

Some of the best parts of the book are the scientific details, such as how the ribbon of the jetstream winds can suddenly snap downwards, sending the wind speed from 25 to 150 knots in a second, and tearing climbers off the mountain.

David Breashears, the co-director/producer and cinematographer of *Everest*, lugged the 48lb camera — a streamlined version of the

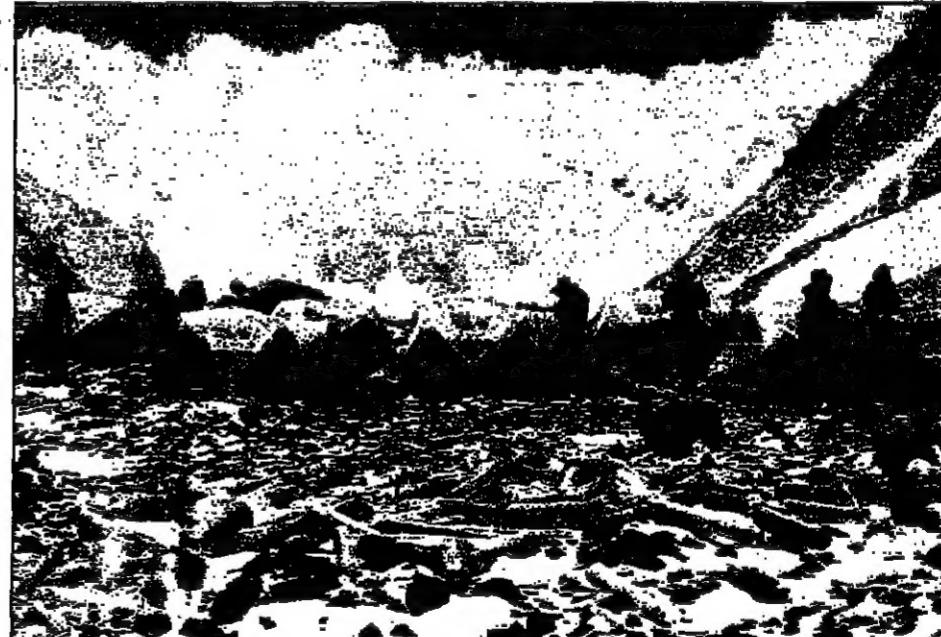
Even from this book of stills, the value of shooting Everest



Members of the Everest film team lower the body of Chen Yu-Nan, the fallen Taiwanese climber, down the Lhotse Face. His partner had continued his ascent.



A team of climbers descends from the Hillary Step as a storm gathers.



Spent oxygen cylinders litter "the world's highest junk yard" on South Col.

after stepping out from his tent at Camp III, without wearing crampons, to relieve himself. His partner Makalu Gau, unaware of what had happened, continued pressing on for the summit. A day later, after his condition had sharply deteriorated, the *Everest* film team radioed up the mountain to tell him his partner was dead. His response: "Oh, thank you very much."

"When you see bodies, you don't have room for hysteria or emotions. It's a survival mechanism. But we do try to bring them down, to bring some closure for their relatives," one of the firm's

On the fateful day of May

10, they had already decided not to join the 18-hour dash for the summit, fearing crowding, as two of the largest commercial teams were both making the attempt. Instead, to their horror, sitting at Camp II, they intercepted increasingly alarming radio messages, while watching the weather

Hall, leader of one of the expeditions, who had chosen to stay with his dying client, Doug Hansen, near the summit, knowing that he could not get him down alone, and then unable to save himself.

The team could hear Hall crying as the final rescue

worsen. As one team member described it, she saw thick dark clouds moving extremely fast into base camp from down the valley. "It was eerie; in two seasons at base camp, I'd attempt was abandoned, and then talked to him through the night until he switched the radio off. Their own pictures of the summit, while an anticlimax after the storm, are unsurprisingly breathtaking.

Finally, and futilely, they
had to give up. "We had
never seen clouds like that.
They were dark, purplish-
black."

Surprisingly breathtaking.

□ **Everest — Mountain without Mercy**, by Broughton Coburn. National Geographic.

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A black and white photograph featuring two large, circular, light-colored shapes on the left and right sides. These circles appear to be thin, translucent disks or perhaps reflections in water. Between them is a dark, vertical column with a textured, almost crystalline appearance, suggesting a mineral or ice formation. The background is dark and indistinct.

حكايات الأهل

Princess's family wins control of souvenir trade

BY ALAN HAMPTON

LAWYERS representing the estate of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, have won an important court ruling that gives her family control of the potentially huge souvenir trade in mementoes of her life.

The ruling, delivered yesterday by Sir Richard Scott, the Vice-Chancellor of the Supreme Court, after a private hearing in chambers in the Chancery Division of the High Court, means that the executors of the Princess's estate will have an absolute say over which souvenirs are licensed, and will be able to veto those they regard as unsuitable or tawdry.

John Major, the former Prime Minister, who has

agreed to act as a legal guardian for Prince William and Prince Harry, has been behind the move, which sought to alter the terms of the Princess's will, made in 1993 when her early death and its huge consequences were unimaginable. In his ruling, Sir Richard granted the Princess's executors extra powers.

To deal with the flood of applications for licensed souvenirs, already running into many hundreds, the court has appointed an extra executor. The Rt Rev Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, will join the late Princess's mother, Frances Shand Kydd, and her sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale, in administering the

Princess's affairs. The application to the High Court was made jointly by the solicitors Boodle Hatfield, representing the Princess, and Lawrence Graham, representing the Princess's estate. Martyn Gower, of Lawrence Graham, said yesterday: "This ruling will enable the executors to do deals with people who wish to trade on the Princess's memory — from whom there are a very large number of applications — and to license products through the trustees of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund."

Mr Gower said that the ruling meant the Princess's executors had effectively gained control of her intellectual property rights, and it went a long way to safeguarding the interests of the Princes, until such time as they reached maturity.

"It is not intended, under this ruling, that the executors should make money directly. Nor does it give them the power to give anything to charity. But it does enable them to control what is produced in the Princess's name, and to ensure that a proportion of the proceeds of any authorised items are paid into the 'memorial fund,'" Mr Gower said.

Mr Major's successful move follows a recent application by solicitors for the Memorial Fund to have the image of the late Princess registered as a trademark, to prevent exploitation by the souvenir trade. The application is being considered by the Patent Office.

Mishcon De Reya, the fund's solicitors, said they had applied for trademark status to prevent "unscrupulous exploitation" of the image of the Princess, which had already become widespread. Trademark protection would enable the fund's trustees to take action against any use of the Diana image that had not been approved by the fund and — after yesterday's High Court ruling — by the executors of her estate.

According to a close friend, the Princess was not planning to marry Mr Fayed and viewed their relationship as merely an extended "summersault". The claim will be made on television tomorrow.

Glen Livett, an electronics tycoon and one of the Princess's confidants, has taken part in a documentary interview in which he says he spoke to her a few hours before her death. In that conversation, he says, she asserted there would be no wedding.

Yesterday's High Court ruling will enable the fund to begin what it says will be an "aggressive" policing campaign worldwide to stamp out souvenirs that claim to have been authorised but have not been.

Young Princes upset by 'last interview'

BY DANIEL MCGROARY AND JOHN O'LEARY

CLOSE friends and aides of Diana, Princess of Wales, said last night that her son had been upset by the publication of a controversial interview which is claimed to have been her last.

Her former head of staff, Michael Gibbons, said: "It's so distressing. You can imagine what it's doing to the family. We seriously doubt the authenticity of this interview. The Princess was very careful in talking to the media. I just can't conceive that she would have given an interview of this nature."

What has caused most concern in royal circles over the interview in *Paris-Match* are disparaging remarks the Princess is alleged to have made about the Prince of Wales and of her son, the Royal Family.

A close friend of the Princess said last night: "At the time of her death, the Prince and Princess were in fact getting on better than they had for a very long time and had resolved for the sake of their sons to build ever-better bridges."

Mr Gibbons, who is a trustee of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, said: "To make over statements of her enthusiasm — she wouldn't have done that in the interests of the family. He insisted that the Princess always informed senior staff when she intended to

give an interview. "I have spoken to everybody about this and nobody knows about it. Some of the wording and phrasing in the alleged interview are not the sort of words and language the Princess would have used."

Mr Gibbons said: "If it had taken place, it would have been during the Princess's first holiday to France when Dodi [Fayed] was only present at the end, and any relationship there may have been had not developed. To talk about marriage and children would have been absolutely extraordinary."

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MICHEL EULER

Bodyguard is questioned for third time

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

WITH his scarred face a vivid reminder of the appalling injuries he suffered in the crash that killed Diana, Princess of Wales, Trevor Rees-Jones was questioned again yesterday about what he remembered of the accident.

Under heavy police guard to protect him from a scrum of photographers, Dodi Fayed's former bodyguard, the sole survivor of the crash, walked with a pronounced limp up the steps of the Palais de Justice for his two-hour interview with investigators. At one stage he stumbled and had to be helped into the building.

For the first time, Mr Rees-Jones chose not to cover his injuries with dark glasses. He appeared dazed and exhausted. He ran his hand along the deep red scar that ran across his forehead to his left eye. There were scars visible all around his eyes and another, shaped like an S, that swept from his cheekbone to the side of his jaw.

Surgeons who have rebuilt his shattered lower face describe the former paratrooper's recovery as remarkable.

They say he will need more operations, including plastic surgery, but is expected to be

scared for life. He is also still

suffering from partial amnesia

and does not recall the events immediately preceding the crash.

Hopes that he would be able to provide a breakthrough in the investi-

gation were fading, judicial sources said after the interview.

Mr Rees-Jones was summoned to Paris by Hervé Stephan, the magistrate leading the French judicial inquiry, for his third formal interview since the accident on August 31.

Christian Curti, Mr Rees-Jones's lawyer, who was present during the interview, said that the bodyguard was "doing better physically" and that the question and answer session went well.

Mr Rees-Jones suffered serious face, neck and chest injuries in the crash in the Place de l'Alma underpass in which the driver, Henri Paul, also died. Doctors say his memory may be permanently impaired.

In his two earlier interviews, he said he remembered only leaving the Ritz hotel in the front seat of the Mercedes driven by M. Paul, with the Princess and Mr Fayed in the rear seats.

"There is nothing new to add, he still does not remember," a source close to the investigation said yesterday.

After the meeting, flanked by four bodyguards employed by Mohammed Al Fayed, his employer and the father of Dodi Fayed, Mr Rees-Jones left through a back entrance of the building to evade photographers. He was flown back to Britain in a private plane.

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Peter Pan flies in face of reality

Who pulls the wires behind theatre's best aerial illusion? Damian Whitworth goes backstage

AS STAGE stunts go, it is one of the oldest. But this week the critics hailed the flying scenes in the National Theatre's new production of *Peter Pan* as possibly the most realistic. Those who devised them fear only that their success might mark the end of the magic.

The scenes in which characters in J.M. Barrie's classic soar through a nursery window and over the tower of Parliament towards Never-Never Land have been acclaimed because there is hardly a wire to be seen.

The illusions were created by Flying by Foy, a company of three technical wizards who maintain as much secrecy about their art as any magician. A request for *The Times* to be taught how to fly was politely declined. Neither could the technology be examined.

Jen Hodgson, managing director of the company, said: "Everyone knows it's wires, and children, especially, spend hours looking for the wires, but without sounding like David Copperfield [the magician, who also likes to fly], we do want to try and retain the magic."

Flying on stage has existed since the Greeks cranked up

the machinery of the first *deus ex machina* to bring gods crashing down from the heavens to resolve impossible tangled plots two and a half millennia ago. Later liturgical and Renaissance drama frequently winched characters through the air, and by the 19th century complex arrangements of pulleys and counterweights were employed.

But the devices were obvious to the naked eye. Only after the first production in 1904 of *Peter Pan*, in which flying is essential, did the race begin to create it more realistically.

Flying by Foy was set up in America by Peter Foy, an expatriate Briton, 50 years ago and has been honing its techniques ever since. The company has been operating in this country for a dozen years.

Kevin Mullery, a stage manager who has seen the Foy team operate, says even those who work closely with the company remain uncertain quite how it does it. "They tend to bring the kit in and set it up overnight. Then they just say 'Do this' and 'Do that', and it's just like lifting a piece of scenery."

In the high roof of the

theatre, a network of pulleys and wires has been erected that makes the actors go up and down, and from side to side, simultaneously. But the trick is in hiding the wires.

"They do come up with the type of tricks that make you say, 'Wow, that's clever,'" Mr Mullery said. "I appreciate they want to keep the mystery."

He explained that years of trial and error with lighting and scenery techniques, and distracting the eyes of the audience from the wires, were some of the tricks used.

"But some of it does defeat me," he admitted.

After a long interrogation, Mr Hodgson admitted that, if one watched the show without lighting, the wires would be clearly visible. The other key ingredient in the recipe was something mysterious that was done to the wires directly attached to the cast.

He would not say what the wires are made of, how many there were or what weight the material used could hold. "We work on it to make it more invisible," was his only explanation.

The other crucial ingredient is the actors. Mr Hodgson maintains that anybody can be taught to fly but whether they will be convincing in front of an audience is another matter. The National Theatre cast worked on its movements in the studio for a month.

"It's an entirely different sensation for actors and hard work," Mr Hodgson said. "Some just immediately get it. Others have to really work at it until they eventually get it. Some always look like they are hanging on the end of a bit of wire."

He says that Foy has never failed to get a performer off the ground, no matter what his or her physique. It managed Frank Bruno for a pantomime, although fortuitously making the illusion seamless was not a priority.

"He was playing Wendy, but it was so cod it didn't really matter. It was not a serious illusion."

The company has recently

been working to fly Torvill

and Dean over ice and is undaunted by even the most undaunted of opera tenors. "We are working with one next year who is bigger than Pavarotti, but we'll certainly get him airborne."

Mr Hodgson is worried that the firm might become a victim of its success. Now that the effects are so sleek, theatrical companies are keener than ever to have flying

scenes in their seasonal shows. This year Foy has been working on about 20 productions, including ten versions of *Peter Pan*, including one in Portugal. "That's great, but it is also something we are wary of," Mr Hodgson said. "The fear is that once people have seen it, they will take it for granted. The more commonplace it becomes, the less it is special or

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Pick of the Panto, Metro, pages 46, 47

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Doctors learn by baby's survival against the odds

BY A CORRESPONDENT

A SEVEN-MONTH-OLD British boy has become the first in the world to be cured of a previously fatal combination of diseases.

Specialists gave the baby, called Tom, only a million-to-one chance of survival after he was diagnosed two months ago with a severe lung infection and cancer of the skin, bone, liver and spleen.

Yesterday the doctors at Newcastle General Hospital described his recovery as

SEVERE COMBINED IMMUNODEFICIENCY

■ Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) is a genetic condition in which the immune system is not properly formed.

■ All affected children will die from infection during the first year of life if the condition is not treated.

■ Between 30 and 40 children a year are born with the condition in Britain. The younger the child at diagnosis the better the chances of survival.

■ The symptoms can easily be misdiagnosed: recurrent infections, particularly chest infections, that won't go away; skin conditions diarrhoea; the child does not put on weight and is sickly.

■ Successful treatment involves a bone marrow transplant to replace the defective immune system with a new one that can fight off infections. Bone marrow works best if the patient and the bone marrow donor are tissue-type identical. Brothers and sisters have the best chance of having identical tissue type.

would kill the boy. Instead they gave him a bone marrow transplant, although this was a high-risk, untried treatment and doctors thought it could also have killed him.

However, within weeks, Tom's cancer was cured. Yesterday his parents, John and Kathy, looked on as their son was able to come out of the sterile "bubble" that for the past two months has protected him against infection. The family will spend Christmas at a house within the hospital grounds.

In Britain about 40 babies a year are found to be suffering from the condition, 12 of whom are treated at the Newcastle unit. They are believed to have a 50-50 chance of survival and a bone marrow transplant is considered to be the only treatment.

However, Tom's condition was complicated by the fact that he already had a viral chest infection when he was admitted to hospital, which meant his chances of survival were very small. On the day of his bone marrow transplant, doctors received test results that showed growths on his ribs, spleen and liver were cancerous. Andrew Cant, con-

sultant paediatric immunologist at the hospital, who treated Tom, said: "When we were about to do the bone marrow transplant Tom looked like he was not far from death so when we were given the information about the cancer we knew he had as close to a zero chance of survival as you can get."

The conventional treatment would have been to give anti-cancer drugs, but we

knew no one who had been given this treatment had survived. We believed the cancer had developed because Tom had no immune system and we thought if we put in a new immune system through a bone marrow transplant, it would get rid of the cancer.

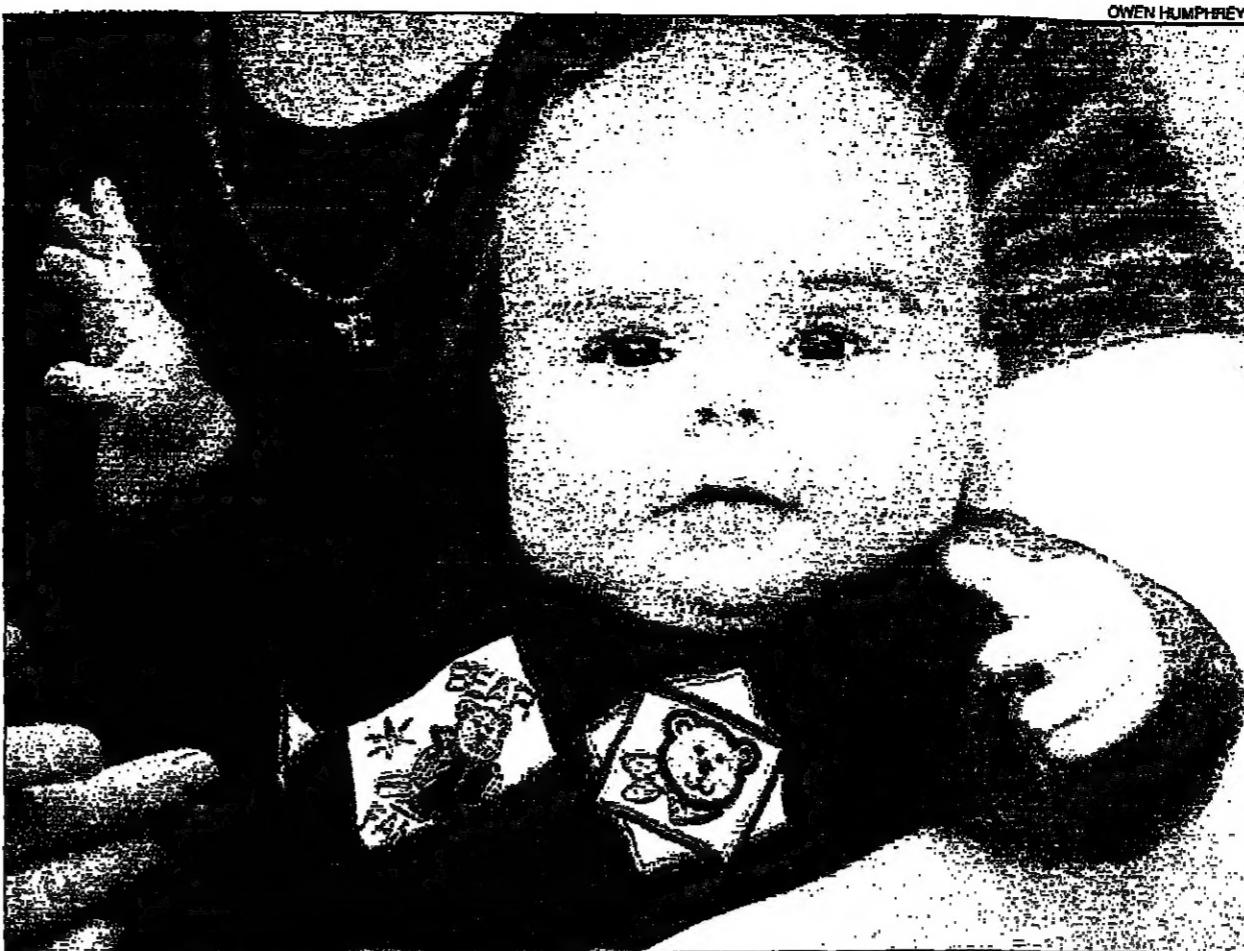
"It was a long shot, but we decided to take the gamble and go with the bone marrow transplant — and it worked. Three weeks after the opera-

tion the cancer had disappeared." Following the surgery Tom developed pneumonia, a severe lung infection, and doctors again feared for his survival as it kills almost every baby who develops it. However, he responded well to aggressive anti-inflammatory treatment and the infection has gone.

Ten weeks on from the surgery, Tom has no cancer, no infection and a fully func-

tional immune system. He is on a small dose of antibiotics and drugs to boost his immune system every three weeks. "This baby has made an almost miraculous recovery from two complications of SCID that were each almost always fatal," Dr Cant said.

"His condition will need to be monitored very carefully to make sure that the cancer does not return, although it seems unlikely."



Tom, who has survived cancer and infections that are usually fatal. His treatment helped to point the way forward

Girl killed and sisters hurt at blackspot

BY BILL HOFFMANN

A GIRL aged ten was killed and her three sisters injured early yesterday when a road-sweeping lorry crashed into them at a pedestrian crossing near their home.

Police said the sisters were walking to a bank to withdraw money for Christmas shopping and planned to celebrate the birthday of one of them later in the day. Stephanie Popat died from internal injuries in the accident at Bushbury, Wolverhampton.

Stephanie's sister, Natalie, 13, fractured her skull and had facial injuries. Another sister, Maria McCormack, who was 19 yesterday, had head injuries, a broken shoulder and facial cuts after being dragged 25ft. A third sister, Selina Shaw, 3, was treated for cuts.

Police said it appeared the lorry had been travelling too fast as it came off a roundabout. The driver was identified as Roger Edwards, in his fifties, of Staffordshire. Neighbours said the crossing was a blackspot they had complained about for years. □ A man died and 13 people were injured when a minibus containing staff on a Christmas outing from P&O at Dover was hit by an articulated lorry in heavy rain and thick fog. Grahame House, who died at the scene, was married with three children. Three colleagues were seriously injured.

Murder case parents 'kept in dark'

BY AUDREY MAGEE



Toscan du Plantier: bludgeoned to death

THE parents of a Frenchwoman bludgeoned to death at her remote Irish holiday home last Christmas arrived in West Cork yesterday to attend a memorial Mass for their daughter. They also want to know what progress police are making in the hunt for her killer.

Georges and Marguerite Bouniol will attend a service tomorrow in the Roman Catholic Church at Goleen, the village closest to the isolated farmhouse hideaway of Sophie Toscan du Plantier, 38. It is in a ruggedly beautiful area close to Mizen Head, the most southwesterly point of Ireland.

Mme Toscan du Plantier, a television producer and the estranged wife of the president of the French Film Academy, was found there by a neighbour on the

morning of December 23. She had been bludgeoned to death. She was alone on the night of the murder, and made a late-night telephone call to her husband, Daniel, before going to bed. Police believe she was attacked in the garden when she went to investigate a noise. She suffered crushing blows to the face and head, but the immediate cause of death was laceration of the brain, possibly caused by a concrete block or rock being dropped on her head. "It was a mad, frenzied attack. Really horrible," one police source said.

Officers have spent 12 months going over the details of the murder and interviewed 1,300 people, some of them three or four times. They made two arrests — Ian Bailey, an English freelance journalist, and Jules Thomas, his Welsh partner — but released both without charge. Police now believe they have a witness

who may be able to give them vital evidence. A married local woman having an affair with an old boyfriend saw a man in the area on the morning of the 23rd. She initially refused to testify, but after much cajoling and reassurance, police have persuaded her to give evidence.

Mr and Mrs Bouniol, frustrated at the lack of progress, this week criticised the Irish authorities for failing to keep them informed. They were last briefed by the police in February.

Mme Bouniol, arriving at Cork airport yesterday, said she wanted to see police compile sufficient evidence to convict the killer. The couple will discuss the case with them over the weekend. "We have come here to attend Sophie's Mass. We want to meet our friends and the people of the area and we intend to visit her home," Mme Bouniol said.

NEW IN BRIEF

Third of Britons admit to racism

Almost a third of Britons admit to being racist, according to a survey of 16,000 people throughout the European Union. But that still makes Britain with 32 per cent of native-born citizens acknowledging racist views, among the least prejudiced of the 15 member states. Other figures include 35 per cent in Belgium, 48 per cent in France and low 40s in Denmark and Austria.

Ecstasy offence

Tasmin Watts, 19, a biochemistry student at Royal Holloway College, Egham, Surrey, was put on probation for two years for selling Ecstasy tablets. She was attempting to recover the £3,000 she had lent to her drug-dealing 41-year-old boyfriend, by whom she is seven months pregnant.

Poison gas risk

Several thousand British troops could have been affected by Iraqi nerve gas from weapons destroyed after the Gulf War. John Reid, the Armed Forces Minister, said the levels of potential exposure from a nerve gas cloud were "very unlikely" to pose any health hazard.

Firm is old hat

The firm that made the top hats for the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* has closed after 225 years because of lack of demand. Christys, of Stockport, Greater Manchester, made top hats for Royal Ascot and royal garden parties and bowlers for City gents.

Queen buys land

The Queen has bought 1,000 acres of land adjoining her 50,000-acre Balmoral estate in Grampian from the Earl of Airlie, Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household. The land, southeast of Braemar, includes the 3,143 ft mountain of Tolmount. The price was not disclosed.

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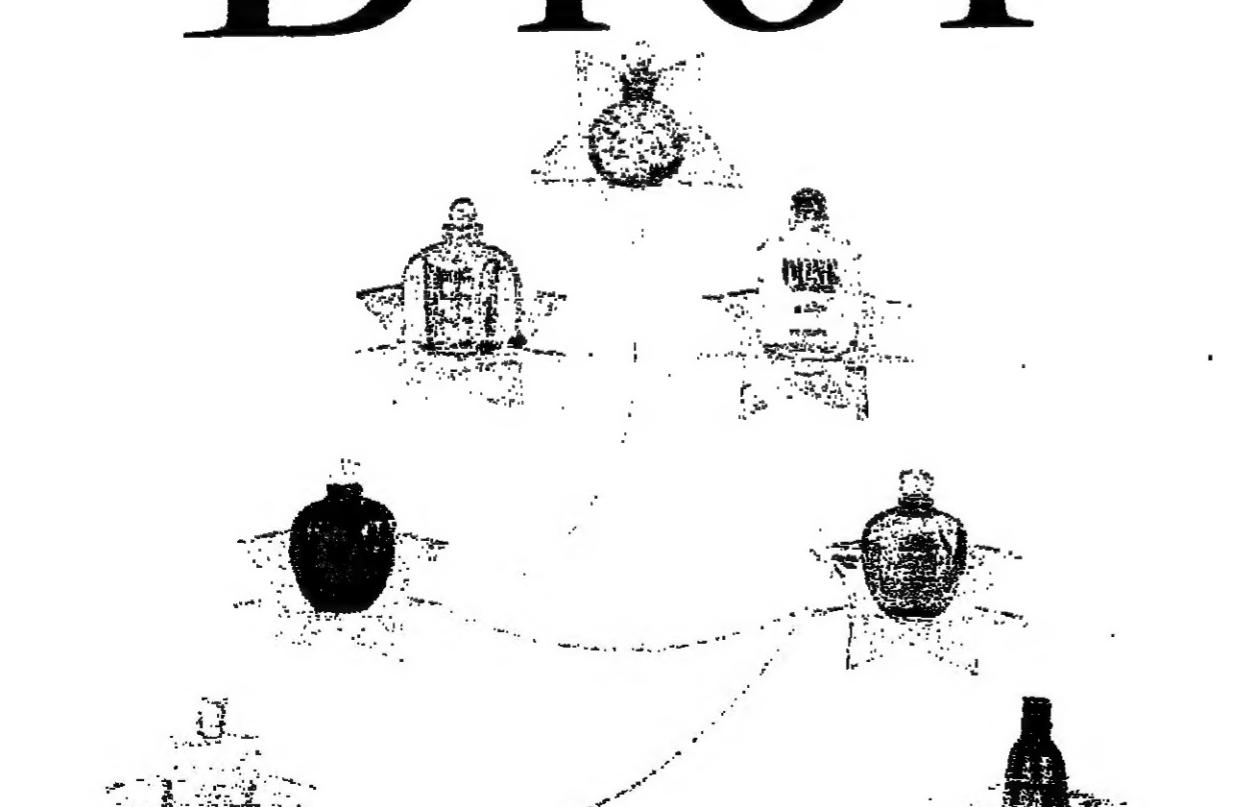
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Fear of defeat produced illegal policy

THE "homes for votes" scandal that has left Dame Shirley Porter and David Weeks facing a £27 million surcharge was rooted in an alarmingly poor showing by the Conservatives in the May 1986 local elections.

The Tories saw their majority cut from 26 to four, and came within 100 votes of losing four wards, which would have handed control to Labour. In the summer of 1986 Lady Porter and trusted councillors and officers met to develop a strategy that would ensure the party won again in 1990 to avoid what she called "the nightmare of Labour being in charge of Parliament and Whitehall".

The result of the meetings was the policy of "Building

ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL

Reports by Mark Henderson

Stable Communities" which led to yesterday's High Court ruling. Under the plan, eight Labour marginal wards would be transformed into Tory strongholds by earmarking council houses and flats for sale to young professionals under right-to-buy legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher. The idea was to fill the wards with likely Conservative-voting yuppies rather than homeless people on the waiting lists who were more likely to vote Labour.

When a flat fell vacant in one of the target wards —

Bayswater, Cavendish, Hamilton Terrace, Little Venice, Millbank, St James's, Victoria and West End — it would not be referred to as "designated" for sale and boarded up until a suitable buyer was found. Hundreds of flats were left unoccupied at a cost of more than £5 million a year, while waiting lists grew. Many were sold at big discounts.

The homeless were ignored. Offered places in outer London boroughs such as Hillingdon, or moved to dilapidated tenements allegedly contaminated with asbestos. The aim

of the policy was clearly signalled by memos and minutes bearing titles such as "economic justification for G. Mander on housing" and "immediate need to socially engineer the population in marginal wards".

Parallel to the designated sales, planning and environmental policies were slanted to gentrify the marginal wards. A total of 9,000 homes were designated for eventual sale with the council setting a target of 500 sales a year.

To councillors and officers, there was little doubt who was in charge of the policy. "Shirley was in the driving seat," said Peter Hartley, the former chairman of housing, whose surcharge was quashed yesterday. "Her intention was

to gain electoral advantage by selling more properties in marginal wards."

Support came from David Weeks, the deputy leader, Mr Hartley and Michael Dutt, who succeeded Mr Hartley as housing chairman and killed himself after being strongly criticised by the district auditor's interim report in 1994.

Equally important were the roles played by three supposedly non-political council employees: Bill Phillips, the managing director; Graham England, the housing director; and Paul Hayler, his deputy. The officers carried out the policy despite knowing that it was wrong and possibly unlawful, according to the auditor's report.

Mr Phillips and Mr Eng-

land were cleared yesterday of wilful misconduct. Mr Hayler's appeal is pending because of ill health. The scandal began to break in 1988, when Richard Stone, a family doctor, noticed large

numbers of flats being boarded up and started to complain. The Labour opposition took up the cause, and a BBC Panorama documentary in July 1989 led to 13 complaints and an inquiry by John

Magill, the district auditor.

In May 1990 the Conservatives increased their majority to 50, helped by having the country's second-lowest poll tax. Dame Shirley stood down as leader the next year. Mr Magill's report in 1994 suggested that six councillors and four officers were guilty of wilful misconduct, and imposed a preliminary surcharge of £21 million.

In May the final report found Dame Shirley, Mr Weeks, Mr Hartley, Mr Phillips, Mr England and Mr Hayler guilty of wilful misconduct and "jointly and severally liable" for a surcharge of £31.6 million. One councillor and two officers were cleared. The late Dr Dutt was not named in the report.

Workaholic who kept an eye on the main chance

SHIRLEY PORTER

THE failure of Dame Shirley Porter's appeal against the multimillion-pound surcharge imposed for her role in the "homes-for-votes" scandal is a humiliation for one of local government's most flamboyant figures.

The Tesco heiress, whose £70 million fortune puts her and her husband 26th in *The Sunday Times'* list of the richest 500 Britons, brought a swashbuckling populism to London Conservatism in the 1980s as she aped the outsider's instincts of her heroine, Margaret Thatcher.

She mixed glamour with a ruthless business sense learnt from her father, Sir Jack Cohen, the East End market trader who founded the Tesco supermarket chain, and never missed a decent photo opportunity. It was Dame Shirley who drove a council "poop-scoop" machine to demonstrate to Baroness Thatcher her crusade against dog mess. She recently merited an entry in Christine Hamilton's *Bumper Book of British Battleaxes*.

Like Lady Thatcher, she was a workaholic who demanded the same from those who worked for her and

brooked little in the way of dissent from her underlings. She adopted her father's mantra, "You can't do business sitting on your arse," and demanded that her team remain on call at all hours of the day. After once telephoning a council officer at 11pm only to find he was in bed, she asked in astonishment: "Why's the matter?"

Her emergence as a female politician second in stature only to Lady Thatcher was sudden and unexpected, and followed a life spent largely as a traditional Jewish wife and mother. Born in 1930 in Clapton, East London, her father withdrew from Warren School in Worthing, West Sussex, before she could sit A levels, reportedly because the school governors turned her down for head girl on account of her Jewish name, and sent her to finishing school in Switzerland.

Following the exposure of the "homes-for-votes" affair in a BBC *Panorama* documentary, she stepped down as council leader in 1991, taking on the ceremonial role of Lord Mayor. After two years, during which she rarely set foot in Westminster City Hall and came close to disqualification as a councillor for absenteeism, she retired from local politics in 1993 and was made a dame.

Dame Shirley, 67, now lives in Israel in the summer and America in the winter, in smart properties on the Tel Aviv seafront and in Palm Springs, California.

Her political career was initially held back by what fellow Conservatives termed the "Leon Brittan problem": a



Dame Shirley Porter, when she was Lord Mayor of Westminster, riding in the 1992 New Year's Day parade

British assets are moved beyond auditor's grasp

HER FORTUNE

"minded" to surcharge ten councillors and officials to a total £21 million in 1994. Dame Shirley took steps to transfer formal ownership of her British assets. In 1994 her Tesco shareholding, worth £56 million, was moved to an undisclosed account and she sold her penthouse flat in Belgravia to her son Michael. Other assets are thought to have been transferred to Israel and California, where the Porters have homes.

None of the 19 million Tesco shares left to Dame Shirley by her father, the store's founder Sir Jack Cohen, remains in her sole name. Her published holding in the firm had declined from 4.8 million shares in 1990 to 3 million in 1994, before it was dismantled.

The Porter Foundation, a charity set up by the Porters in Israel, is thought to have assets of £20 million and an annual income of £1 million.

Accountants hired by Westminster council's lawyers to trace Dame Shirley's assets report that few are "attackable" in Britain.

Magill hails court ruling as 'terrific'

OTHER PLAYERS

JOHN MAGILL, the district auditor for Westminster, sees yesterday's decision as a vindication of his seven-year inquiry.

He qualified as an accountant 28 years ago, and has built a reputation as a meticulous investigator. A senior partner in Deloitte & Touche, who were paid £275 an hour for his services, he worked almost exclusively on the Westminster case from 1989 to 1996.

While he called yesterday's ruling a "terrific decision", the judges criticised the length and £3 million-plus cost of his inquiry and his decision to hold a press conference in 1994 to announce preliminary findings in which he said he was "minded" to find ten people guilty of wilful misconduct.

David Weeks, whose appeal was dismissed along with Dame Shirley's, is the only person originally surcharged still connected to the council. He is a councillor for St George's ward, though, if he is declared bankrupt, he would be forced to resign.

He was deputy leader to Dame Shirley, succeeding her in 1991. The judges found his role in the designated sales affair was "inextricably linked" to Dame Shirley's, and that he had lied to Mr Magill and the High Court when he said the policy had been abandoned after legal advice.

Peter Hartley, who sat on the council from 1977 to 1988, was the only councillor whose appeal was allowed. He resigned after taking the blame for its sale of three cemeteries to speculators for £5p, and now runs a video shop. As chairman of the housing committee between 1986 and 1988, he

presided over the introduction of the designated sales policy. The judges decided that, while guilty of misconduct for promoting a policy he knew had been developed with an unlawful purpose, he was not guilty of wilful misconduct because his own objective, selling as many houses as possible, had been lawful.

Bill Phillips, managing director of the council from 1987 to 1991, was found guilty of misconduct but not of wilful misconduct for carrying out a policy he knew was improper. The misconduct was not wilful because he did not know the policy was unlawful.

Graham England, director of housing, was moved to the council's external relations department when the scandal broke. He was made redundant in September days before the appeal started. His appeal succeeded because he was found not to have been aware that the policy he was operating was unlawful. The court also accepted that Mr England had advised Dame Shirley that the policy was wrong.

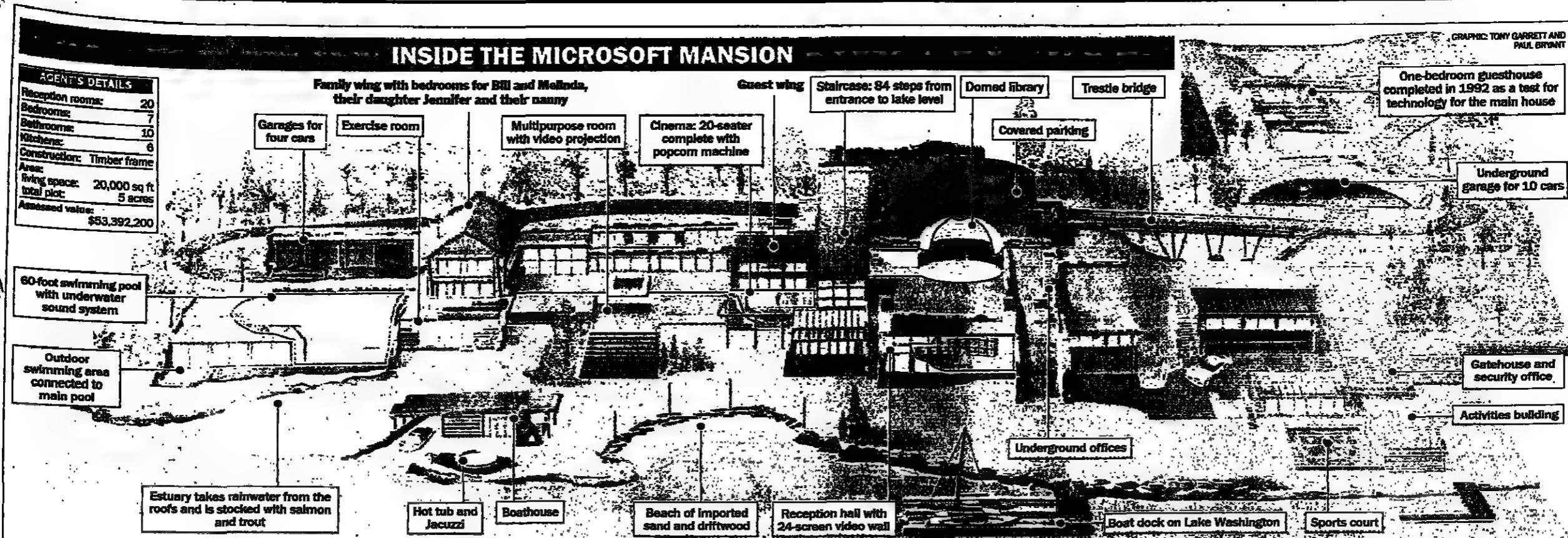
Paul Hayler, assistant director of housing, had his appeal stayed when he suffered a nervous breakdown, which also led to his retirement from the council in September. He helped to disguise a policy he knew was unlawful.

Michael Dutt, who was not named in the Magill report, committed suicide after he was strongly criticised in Mr Magill's interim findings in 1994. A GP, he succeeded Mr Hartley as co-chairman of the housing committee with Judith Warner, a councillor cleared of wrongdoing.

Notice to Halifax saving and banking customers.

The Halifax is happy to announce another interest rate increase for the New Year on its saving and certain banking products effective from 1st January 1998.

ACCOUNT	UK rates				Non-resident rates				Non-personal rates			
	GROSS P.A. %	GROSS C.A.R. %	NET P.A. %	NET C.A.R. %	GROSS P.A. %	GROSS C.A.R. %	NET P.A. %	NET C.A.R. %	GROSS P.A. %	GROSS C.A.R. %	NET P.A. %	NET C.A.R. %
HALIFAX TESSA 2 Variable Rate Including maturity bonus Matured TESSA	7.25	-	-	-	7.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BONUS GOLD (including bonus) £100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+	7.50	-	6.00	-	7.35	-	7.10	-	5.68	-	-	-
Monthly Income Option (Excluding 1% annual bonus) £100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+	7.00	-	5.50	-	6.85	-	6.70	-	5.36	-	-	-
£6.60	-	5.25	-	5.65	-	5.30	-	5.04	-	-	-	-
£6.30	-	5.04	-	6.15	-	6.10	-	4.88	-	-	-	-
£6.50	-	4.95	4.97	-	6.35	-	6.10	4.55	4.66	-	-	-
£6.00	-	4.47	4.57	-	5.85	-	5.70	4.25	4.34	-	-	-
£5.60	-	4.17	4.25	-	5.45	-	5.30	3.94	4.02	-	-	-
£5.30	-	3.94	4.02	-	5.15	-	5.10	3.78	3.86	-	-	-
60 DAY GOLD £100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+	7.20	-	5.76	-	7.05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.65	-	5.32	5.50	-	6.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.35	-	5.08	5.20	-	6.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.10	-	4.88	5.05	-	5.95	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£5.60	-	4.48	5.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.97	7.20	5.58	5.72	6.83	7.05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.46	6.65	5.17	5.29	6.31	6.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£6.17	6.35	4.94	5.05	6.03	6.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£5.94	6.10	4.75	4.85	5.79	5.95	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£5.46	5.60	4.37	4.46	5.32	5.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOLID GOLD £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+	5.85	-	4.68	-	5.70	-	5.65	-	4.52	-	-	-
£10,000+	5.75	-	4.60	-	5.60	-	5.55	-	4.44	-	-	-
£5.35	-	4.28	-	5.20	-	5.25	-	4.28	-	-	-	-
£5.00	-	4.08	-	4.95	-	5.00	-	4.00	-	-	-	-
£3.10	-	3.44	-	4.15	-	4.15	-	3.32	-	-	-	-
£250,000+ £125,000+ £62,500+ £31,250+ £15,625+ £7,812.50+ £3,906.25+ £1,953.125+ £976.5625+ £488.28125+ £244.140625+ £122.0703125+ £61.03515625+ £30.517578125+ £15.2587890625+ £7.62939453125+ £												



Lid off the rustic-chic palace of Bill Gates

Giles Whittell
has a computer
tour of the
Microsoft
mogul's haven
of high tech



Though still not finished, the lakeside stronghold of the world's richest man is gradually revealing itself as a labyrinthine monument to rustic chic.

Bill Gates's \$53 million (£32 million) mansion, best-known for its elaborate computer system, also boasts half a million board feet of recycled timber, towering pillars of ancient Douglas fir and roofs planted with grass and local shrubs. Exposed concrete has been distressed to look old, and rainwater is channelled into an artificial estuary stocked with trout and salmon. The Tarnesque of the computer world has built himself a sprawling palace of pavilions linked by tunnels, fibre-optic cables and a theme of restrained Northwestern opulence. Its first three-dimen-



The complex, on a five-acre plot on the Lake Washington waterfront, took seven years to build according to the specifications of Bill Gates and wife Melinda

sional depiction, compiled from a CD-Rom published with a recent book by Mr Gates, shows the surprisingly modest family quarters under traditional sloping gables next to a four-car garage at the north end of the complex.

The Microsoft chairman,

his wife Melinda and two-year-old daughter have four bedrooms between them and one for a nanny. Below and in front of the family wing is an exercise building complete

with a trampoline room in the shape of a 20ft cube. Next door, swimmers in the indoor pool can enjoy underwater music and dive under a glass wall to emerge outside.

Behind the main complex, two large visitors' car parks, one underground, leave a short walk to the guest wing, which follows the steep slope of the lakeshore.

Mr Gates seems loath to welcome overnight guests: this

wing has just two bedrooms. It has a 24-seat formal dining room, however. A domed and panelled reading room houses his library, including Leonardo da Vinci's Codex Leicester, which he bought for \$30.8 million. A large reception hall

followed development this week threatened to erode the cyber baron's \$40 billion fortune, though not his status as the world's richest person. Heavy trading in Microsoft stock and a \$4.31 drop in its share price followed news on Thursday that the US Justice

Department had asked a federal judge to find the computer giant in contempt of court and begin levying fines of up to \$1 million a day.

The department's request followed an investigation lasting more than a year into Microsoft's licensing practices, especially its strategy of forcing computer manufacturers to include its Internet browser software, known as Microsoft Explorer, in software packages based around

Windows 95. Anti-trust investigators insist customers should be able to choose which browser to use. They have accused Microsoft of using its 90 per cent market share in other areas of the software business to mount an unfair challenge to its chief competitor in the browser war, Netscape's Navigator. The arcane but bitter dispute between Microsoft and the federal Government has raised as many questions

about the department's anti-trust division as it has about Mr Gates's business practices.

Begins more than a century ago to protect consumers from collusion and price-fixing by greedy oil and railway magnates, the Government's anti-trust efforts have been roundly criticised by some as too slow and bureaucratic to keep up with the computer business.

Others have accused investigators of missing the point. "Microsoft really hasn't done anything wrong," William Baxter, a veteran anti-trust lawyer, told *US News and World Report* recently. In the new high-tech economy, "companies will compete for markets, rather than in markets. We'll have a series of companies leapfrogging one another. The worst thing we can do is weaken the incentives to be the successful frog."

Mr Gates's run-in with the Government is unlikely to affect his company's bottom line. As he admitted recently, fines of \$1 million a day would be a trifle for his company. "What the judge says we'll do, we'll do. That's the way it works in this country." In the meantime, experts believe, the company's lawyers have already dragged out the dispute long enough for Microsoft to dethrone Netscape.

Back on the shore of Lake Washington, the Gates family have been more neighbourly. Fellow residents of wealthy Medina, where the median house price is nearly \$500,000, have had free car washes during the seven-year construction project, and one old woman who shares the lake-front with the family now has her grass cut gratis by a Microsoft gardener.

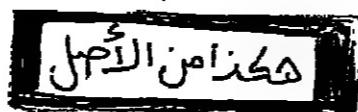
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Lawyers lead the way to a woman's heart

AS A New York tycoon found to his cost this week, American law and lawyers have a soft spot for the girlfriends of the rich and famous. John Lattanzio's bid to retrieve some of the \$3 million (£1.8 million) of gifts he lavished on a Latvian lover left him with a diamond ring worth \$29,000 and a new role as the laughing stock of Wall Street. The lover, Ines Misani, kept her flat, most of her trinkets and a shiny new Mercedes.

Ms Misani is the latest in a sultry line of women willing to accept and wear staggeringly costly baubles, but refusing to be treated like them. She owes her triumph partly to her steely temperament — "I get attached gifts I'm a beautiful woman," she said — and also to the flamboyant California lawyer who 25 years ago invented palimony.

Marvin Mitchelson, whose Beverly Hills office boasted a throne from Rudolph Valentino and an etched glass Birth of Venus, made legal history in 1972 with a lawsuit against Lee Marvin by his ex-lover. As Mr Marvin's "cook, companion and confidante" for six years, Michelle Triola was entitled to half the \$3.6 million Marvin estate, even though

Palimony is a girl's best friend, reports Giles Whittell in Los Angeles

she had never been his wife. Mr Mitchelson argued: His client won a mere \$104,000, but the term "palimony" was coined and an era of romantic trepidation dawned. Set, not marriage; had become the mark beyond which vast fortunes were fair game.

"Some people still go blindly into love like they do in the movies," said Cary Goldstein, a Los Angeles palimony expert, when asked about the Lattanzio case. "Others are more cautious. Under palimony, if someone promises you 'Babe, I'll always take care of you,' you don't have the concept of separate property. You're saying 'everything' You're saying 'forever'."

Dodi Fayed said he might have said too much to Kelly Fisher, the Californian model, earlier this year. Claiming she had ruined her career for

him, she retained a feared women's rights attorney in Gloria Allred and sued him for \$500,000 on learning of his liaison for Diana, Princess of Wales. And Sandra Locke won an undisclosed settlement from Clint Eastwood after 13 years of living together and six years of litigation.

An estimated 40,000 lawyers in the US now specialise in divorce and palimony. History shows the key to winning a high-profile palimony case is to hire one of the few specialists willing to drag wealthy celebrities through the mire of a public relations war.

Until the mid-1980s Mr Mitchelson, now 68, was an unrivalled break-up lawyer to the stars, charging millions to separate the likes of Joan Collins, Tony Curtis and Zsa Zsa Gabor from their spouses.

The reigning king of celebrity divorce and palimony cases is New York's Raoul Felder, 62. After winning handsome settlements for the former wives of Mel Brooks, Martin Scorsese and Mike Tyson, he was a natural choice for Ms Misani.

Indeed Ms Misani called the deal "very sweet" and is now linked romantically to an art dealer said to be worth billions.



John Elkann with his uncle Umberto Agnelli

Agnelli puts grandson in driving seat

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

A DECISION by Giovanni Agnelli, the honorary chairman and patriarch of Fiat, to bring his 21-year-old grandson John Elkann into the Fiat boardroom, was yesterday greeted as a bold bid to ensure continued "family control" of the giant company.

The move comes only a week after the untimely death from cancer of Giovanni Alberto Agnelli, Signor Agnelli's nephew and "heir apparent", at the age of 33. Signor Agnelli, 76, moved "with remarkable speed" to scotch talk of a succession crisis, *L'Espresso* said.

The move comes only a week after the untimely death from cancer of Giovanni Alberto Agnelli, Signor Agnelli's nephew and "heir apparent", at the age of 33. Signor Agnelli, 76, moved "with remarkable speed" to scotch talk of a succession crisis, *L'Espresso* said.

Not only is Fiat Italy's largest private company, with an empire embracing the newspapers and football teams as well as cars, it also

continues family dynasties. The Agnellis have been compared to the Medici in the range of their wealth and power, and Signor Agnelli is often described as Italy's "uncrowned King".

Although they have the biggest stake in Fiat, the Agnellis have to share control with several banks and insurance companies, and have had to steer the firm through a major restructuring.

John Elkann — the son of Margherita Agnelli, Gianni Agnelli's daughter, and her first husband Alain Elkann, the writer and journalist — is still a student, and is too young to take over the firm when Cesare Romiti, the present chairman, retires next June at 75. But Signor Agnelli indicated that he saw



John Elkann, 21, joins the board to ensure continued "family control" of Fiat

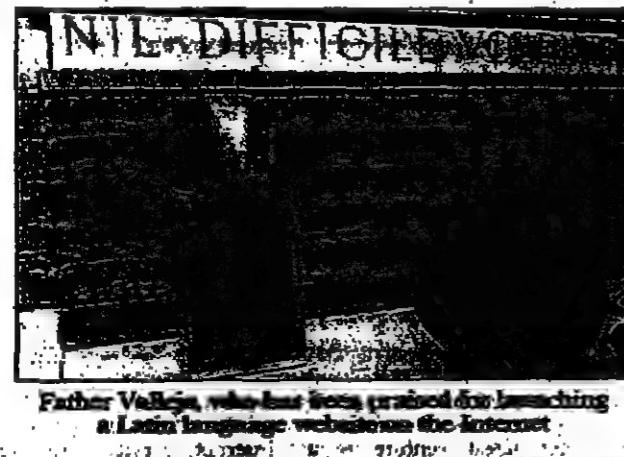
his grandson as his heir in the long term, and pointed out that he himself had joined the Fiat board at 22 and became vice-president at the age of 25. "He may be young, but so was I when I joined the board in 1943."

Signor Elkann was christened "Jacopo" but prefers to be known as John, a reflection of his American birth and international background. He was born in New York in 1976, and has a brother Lapo, 20, and a sister,

Ginevra, 18. He attended a lycée in Paris and is now in his third and final year of engineering studies at Turin Polytechnic.

Signor Elkann had prepared for a future in Fiat by doing summer work experience stints at the Magneti Marelli factory in Birmingham last year and at the Fiat plant in Poland this year. There is speculation that he may in due course change his first name to Giovanni, the Italian equivalent of John.

Both the firm's founder and its present patriarch were named Giovanni, and the late Giovanni Alberto had been dubbed "Giovanni III" by the press before his death last Saturday. It is not clear who will take over as "interim" chairman next year, although the most favoured candidate is Gabriele Galateri di Genola, 50, Fiat's aristocratic managing director and the right-hand man of Umberto Agnelli, 66, Signor Agnelli's brother.



Father Valente, who has been granted an audience with the Pope, launching a Latin language website on the Internet.

Vatican scholar tries to raise Latin from the dead

By Richard Owen

AN ANCIENT Roman returning to the Rome of today might be horrified by the traffic, the mobile phones and the fast food restaurants — but at least he (or she) would be able to communicate, thanks to an up-to-date Latin dictionary.

The dictionary, the result of eight years' work by Vatican scholars, tackles the tricky question of how to translate concepts and inventions unknown (mercifully) to Horace and

Ovid. Latin is still the official language of the Vatican state, but was dropped from the Roman Catholic liturgy in the 1960s. It is not much used within the Vatican nowadays except by specialists, who translate papal documents into Latin.

The dictionary's veteran editor, Monsignor Carlo Egger, 83, who has served four popes as chief Latinist, indicated that he had found counterparts to such modern words as aerosol spray (*liquor nubiligenus*), motorbike (*brotta automataria*), and

stripper (*sui ipius nudator*). But the arrival of the dictionary in Rome bookshops reveals an even fuller vocabulary of late 20th century phenomena. After arriving at the "aeronautum portus", or airport, a returning Roman could take a taxi, or "autocineum meritorum", to the Colosseum or the Pantheon, which he might be pleased to note are still standing despite pollution. While stuck in a traffic jam or "in obstructions", listening to Roman drivers sounding their horns, or

"sonori autocineti indiosi," he could use a mobile phone, or "telephonium cellularium" to phone ahead and explain why he is late.

On arrival, struck by the fashions of today's Rome, he might like to drop into a department store or "habitunum emporium" and kit himself out with a new jacket (*unicula manicata*), shirt (*subtula*), trousers (*bracae*), socks (*pedules*) and shoes (*calces*), with some new underwear, or *subligares*. They could then repair to a "taberna Macdonaldiana" for a

hamburger. This month Monsignor Egger organised a "Latin Festival" at the Vatican addressed by the Pope, who lamented the decline of spoken Latin and urged its revival. He praised a Spanish Jesuit priest in Rome, Father Felix Sanchez Vallejo of the Gregorian University, for launching a Latin language website on the Internet: www.unigre.urbe.it/ /vallejo/breviter.htm

□ *Lexicon Recentis Latinitatis*, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana 160,000 lire

SOFTENER.

How have we cushioned the blow
of paying for a sporty new hatchback?

Russia claims victory over British spies

THE head of Russia's counter-intelligence service claimed yesterday that Britain's espionage operations in the country had been set back 20 years after the arrest last year of a Russian diplomat working for MI6.

In an interview marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of the notorious Cheka secret police, Nikolai Kovalyov, the director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), boasted that British intelligence had been dealt a severe blow last April with the arrest of Platon Obukhov.

The former Second Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was arrested by FSB officers, who seized high-tech transmitting equipment supplied by British intelligence. He has been jailed, but his defence claims that he should not be tried because he is mentally unbalanced.

His arrest led to the worst spy row between London and Moscow since the end of the Cold War. The Russians asked for a dozen British embassy staff implicated in the case to be removed. In tit-for-tat manoeuvres, four diplomats were subsequently expelled from each embassy. "Successful op-

Yeltsin believes nation was too hard on KGB, writes Richard Beeston

erational measures carried out with respect to this case have enabled us to set the British Secret Intelligence Service back 20 years," Mr Kovalyov told the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. "The British were planning to supply all their agents on Russian territory with the kind of equipment used by Platon Obukhov for secret communications with the Moscow SIS residents."

He added that his service had recently apprehended two more Russian agents working for foreign powers, whose identities would be revealed in the new year.

Mr Kovalyov's upbeat message was echoed by President Yeltsin, who resumed his weekly radio address yesterday, and devoted his message to praising the work of the

secret services. The Russian leader, who looked and sounded much better but has been confined by his doctors to his sanatorium outside Moscow until the end of next week to get over a bad cold, said that the country had been too hard in judging the KGB.

"The state security services were a reflection of the state that existed at the time," he said. While sidestepping the KGB-inspired putsch of 1991, which nearly cost Mr Yeltsin his life, the Kremlin leader insisted that there was no threat of a return to the notorious practices of the KGB and its predecessor, the NKVD, responsible for killing millions of people and suppressing dissent against communism.

Many former victims of the Soviet secret police, meanwhile, gathered this week with rights activists, environmentalists and liberal politicians to give a warning that the FSB was still up to some of the KGB's old tricks. "They are a cancerous growth that is eating in through Russia," said Sergei Grigoryants, the head of the Glasnost Public Association for Victims of State Repression.



PATSY KENSIT: above, the wife of rock singer Liam Gallagher, has reportedly agreed to appear in at least six episodes of *Friends*, the popular American sitcom (Giles Whittell writes).

Kensit, who began acting when she was eight, will fill a void in the sitcom's storyline as a new girlfriend for Ross, the gormless but charming

paleontologist played by David Schwimmer, according to sources quoted on NBC television. Ms Kensit's character will meet him on a blind date at the opera, insiders from the series script department said.

War tribunal to drop charges against three Croats



Anto Furundzija in the dock at The Hague hearing yesterday

FROM TOM WALKER
IN SARAJEVO

WESTERN attempts to bring Bosnian war criminals to justice suffered a setback yesterday, with The Hague tribunal's chief prosecutor, Louise Arbour, recommending that indictments against three Croat suspects be dropped.

At the same time, the gloss was taken from the mainly Dutch operation that lifted two more Croat suspects from central Bosnia on Thursday, as diplomatic sources in Sarajevo revealed the arrest mission

had been bungled two days previously. Elite Dutch marine commandos waited to ambush the two suspects as they returned home from their nightly drinking binge, only to be left empty-handed as they took different routes to their houses.

All told, this week's war crimes tribunal scoreboard makes less impressive reading, with two more names taken but the likelihood that four others will be dropped. Along with the three identified by Ms Arbour, another Bosnian Croat indicted by The Hague must be scratched from the list: investigators

have learned that Stipe Alilovic died in Amsterdam in 1995.

Last night, Alex Ivanko, the tribunal's spokesman in Sarajevo, insisted that a final judgment on Ms Arbour's recommendation was still pending.

□ The Hague Anto Furundzija, 28, a Bosnian Croat seized by Nato troops, pleaded not guilty to charges linked to the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims before the UN criminal tribunal. (Reuters)

Leading article and letters, page 19

WORLD IN BRIEF

Truth commission charges Botha

Cape Town: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has laid criminal charges against P.W. Botha, the former President, for ignoring a summons to testify at hearings into his role as chairman of the State Security Council under apartheid during the 1980s (Sam Kiley writes). This was the first time that anyone has defied an order to appear before the commission. The National Party later condemned the move against Mr Botha. If he is prosecuted and found guilty, he faces two years in jail, a fine of 2,000 rands (£250), or both.

James Earl Ray plea rejected

Memphis: A grand jury panel yesterday refused to open a new investigation into the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. The request was made by a Jack McNeil, former lawyer for James Earl Ray, King's confessed killer. He contended King was killed by someone other than Ray. But the panel said there was not "credible information" to warrant further review. (AP)

Jamaica returns Patterson

Miami: The ruling People's National Party in

Jamaica, led by Percival Patterson, right, the Prime Minister, has scored its third consecutive general election victory (David Adams writes). Mr Patterson's party has 48 confirmed seats in the 60-member parliament, compared to only nine for the opposition Jamaican Labour Party, headed by Edward Seaga, the former Prime Minister. Mr Seaga held his own seat for the ninth straight time.

Texas siege ends peacefully

THE TEXAS day-care centre siege ended peacefully after a 30-hour ordeal in which a gunman took 80 children hostage but later released them all unharmed (Giles Whittell writes). James Monroe Lipscomb, 33, was charged with aggravated kidnapping after surrendering in the northern-Dallas suburb of Plano. The last hostage freed were two of his own children.

EU citizens show racism

Brussels: An average 66 per cent of European Union citizens hold racist views, according to a survey which the Brussels Commission said showed shocking xenophobia (Charles Brenner writes). Six in 10 Britons hold racist views, well below Belgium's 51 per cent and Denmark's 53 per cent.

UN blue beret firm in the red

Wellington: Slow payment by the United Nations has helped put out of business Hills Headwear, the New Zealand company that supplies the organisation's distinctive blue berets, left; The Dominion newspaper reported here. The firm was put into receivership after enduring a year of trading troubles that Harry de Krey, its chief executive, said were made worse by the UN's tardiness in paying, the newspaper claimed. (AP)

CIA polices Palestinian jails

Jerusalem: The Palestinian Authority is to give America's CIA unprecedented control over its security arrangements with Israel (Ross Duffin writes). This includes the right to veto the release of suspected Islamic militants from Palestinian jails.

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RELAX

Britain on alert as fears grow of new flu pandemic

Experts are divided over whether two deaths and six other cases of an A-strain virus in Hong Kong presage a major world outbreak

By NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

ONE of the world's leading flu experts flew into Hong Kong yesterday as fears grew over the spread of "chicken flu".

Daniel Lavanich, of the World Health Organisation, arrived as dozens more people in the former colony were tested for the disease and the number of confirmed cases rose to eight. Hong Kong authorities are meanwhile trying to reassure travellers, fearing that the tourist trade, already hit by the handover to China, will collapse.

Some experts, however, fear that the disease is smouldering away, largely undetected, in mainland China. Monitoring activities there are more than likely spread than in Hong Kong, where the only cases so far have been found. Alan Hay, head of the World Health Organisation's flu centre in Mill Hill, North London, has warned that "surveillance in China is a real problem — we have to think of ways of beefing up monitoring there".

Professor John Orchard, of London Hospital Medical College, warns that sometimes flu can be low, "seeding" itself through the population before bursting out as a pandemic. "So far, it's not exactly leaping along, but it could be smouldering under the surface, which would be very dangerous," he says. "It is very wise that everyone is assuming it could spread."

Of the eight cases so far confirmed, two have died. The latest patient is a four-year-old boy, unrelated to any of the other victims. The patients being tested are all ill with some variety of the influenza A virus, but it may not be the chicken virus, A/H5N1.

Dr Lavanich, who heads the WHO's flu programme, flew in to confer with local

authorities and experts from the US Centres for Disease Control in Atlanta on whether H5N1 posed a real threat of a pandemic — a world epidemic. The question divides the experts. "My guess is that it will snuff itself out," Professor Oxford said, "but most flu people think the opposite."

Fears of a pandemic are fuelled by the fact that this virus has previously been found only in birds, so that human beings have no antibodies against it. Offsetting that is its slow development so far, which suggests that H5N1 is not a highly efficient virus, and may not spread between humans, a necessary step if it is to create a pandemic.

It was not the first time that humans had been infected with avian flu, Professor Oxford said. Volunteers at the Common Cold Research Unit were experimentally infected with avian flu of the H7 and H4 varieties. But it needed a large dose and the infections were mild. So it is not necessarily the case that H5N1 will sweep all before it.

Influenza A viruses are characterised by differences in two viral proteins, haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). The 1918-19 Spanish flu pandemic, the worst this century, was caused by H1N1, which is still in circulation.

The other A virus still circulating is H3N2, which caused the 1968-69 Hong Kong flu pandemic.

There are a total of 15 different H sub-types, of which only three have caused major human epidemics. The rest all infect birds, where they cause diseases quite unlike flu.

The H5N1 type is particularly nasty, affecting virtually every organ in a bird's body and killing thousands almost overnight. But how serious it is as a human disease remains unknown. It is possible that

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A chicken vendor in Hong Kong: most new flu strains emerge in China, where birds and humans live close together

sporadic infection by avian flu has always occurred, but has not been noticed because it has never caused a pandemic. Heightened surveillance may have brought it to light.

A second and more sinister possibility is that some subtle change has taken place in H5N1 to make it more infectious to humans. Flu viruses of the A type undergo two kinds of change: antigenic drift, which happens all the time and accounts for most of the small changes in the viruses that occur from season to season, and antigenic shift, when the H and N proteins abruptly alter. Pandemics are caused by these abrupt shifts.

This case is different. H5N1 is not the result of an antigenic shift from a known human flu virus, but the direct infection of humans by a known avian virus. Typically, new flu viruses pass through other

mammals, usually pigs, before reaching humans — that is why China, where humans, pigs and chickens live in close proximity, is the breeding ground for most new varieties.

H5N1, however, passed directly through the bird-to-human barrier. How it managed to do this is still not known, but subtle changes in the virus — antigenic drift — may have taken place to make it possible. Now that it has infected humans it will continue to change and could pose a future threat.

The next few weeks will be critical. A rapid rise in cases in Hong Kong, followed by the appearance of cases elsewhere, will really set alarm bells ringing. In 1968, when Hong Kong flu caused a pandemic, the first cases were identified in July. The first cases in Britain appeared the following month, and there

MPs back call for more breast screening

By IAN MURRAY

A CAMPAIGN to prevent 2,000 older women a year dying from breast cancer has won the backing of 35 women MPs from all parties. They want invitations to attend screenings to be sent automatically to all women over 65.

At present this service ends once a woman reaches that age, although women over 65 are at the highest risk of developing breast cancer, with more than 47 per cent of new cases and 63 per cent of all deaths in this age group.

Although women over 65 are able to request a screening, the fact that they are not invited to attend means that only 0.3 per cent of them do so. Nearly two thirds of women over 65 told a recent Gallup poll that they thought they were too old for the disease.

"The only reason that the Government can have for not extending the scheme is cost," said Sally Greengross, of Age Concern, which is spearheading the campaign. "We would be appalled if some women's lives are deemed less worthy of resources because they are older."

BARRY YIP

A CENTURY STALKED BY A KILLER



The 1918-19 pandemic took 20 million lives worldwide

1918-19: Spanish flu (H1N1) killed 20 million people around the world, 150,000 of them in England and Wales. It infected about 23 per cent of the population. H1N1 is still in circulation, and causes occasional epidemics, but never on the same scale as 1918-19.

1957-58: Asian flu (H2N2), a milder illness, caused 30,000 excess deaths in Britain, which includes deaths from diseases such as pneumonia, triggered by flu. One person in every six caught it, though in schools the proportion was 50 per cent and in boarding schools 90 per cent.

1968-69: Hong Kong flu (H3N2) infected 8 per cent of the British population, causing 31,000 excess deaths in 1969-70 and a further 47,000 the following winter. It has continued to kill people as it circulates and evolves.

PREPARING FOR THE WORST

Britain was the first country to produce and publish a plan to deal with flu pandemics. It outlines the actions to be taken at each stage by all responsible organisations. This week Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, initiated Phase 1 of the six-part plan.

Phase 0: inter-pandemic period — watchful waiting.

Phase 1: emergence of a new virus outside Britain. Actions include establishing an advisory committee and preparing strains for possible vaccine manufacture.

Phase 2: outbreaks caused by the new virus outside Britain. Intensified monitoring of flu-like illnesses, vaccines ordered from manufacturers.

Phase 3: new virus identified in Britain; pandemic imminent. Health authority and hospital plans to deal with patients activated, non-emergency admissions limited to keep beds clear, advice to public issued.

Phase 4: pandemic flu in Britain. Plans to immunise and treat in full gear, pattern of epidemic followed, bacteria responsible for fatal infections as a result of flu identified and appropriate antibiotics selected, weekly death rates monitored.

Phase 5: end of pandemic. Flu cases return to background levels, advisory committee reports on epidemic and lessons learnt, as do health authorities and trusts.

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LACOSTE

New technique targets prostate cancer

A NEW treatment for prostate cancer developed at the Institute of Cancer Research in Sutton, Surrey, is about to go on national trial in 12 centres.

Conformal radiotherapy aims to kill tumours more accurately and with less damage to surrounding tissue by shaping the X-ray to the contours of the cancer. The institute where it was developed is one of two charities chosen for this year's Times Christmas Appeal.

Radiotherapy for prostate cancer uses several beams of X-rays from different direc-

tions. The beams pass through the body to the site of the tumour and, where they overlap, illuminate the tumour like spotlights picking out an actor on the stage. The problem, explains Dr David Dearnaley of the institute, is that the area illuminated is rectangular, while tumours are not, and that causes damage to healthy tissue ly-

ing around the tumour and limits the dose that can be given.

The new approach is to work out the exact shape of the tumour in three dimensions by CT scanning, then use it to plan the treatment. The X-rays are hard to focus, so the shaping is done by thick metal "jaws" closed around the beam from two sides. In conformal radiotherapy, these jaws are made up of individual fingers of metal which can be adjusted to create a region where the beams intersect which is tailored to the tumour.

One patient who was part of the trial at the Royal Marsden Hospital is Brian Webb, a dentist in Upper Wimpole Street, London, who discovered he had prostate cancer at the end of last year. He arranged to have his course of radiotherapy first thing in the mornings. "I was told I would be very tired, but in fact I was back in the surgery ready to treat patients by 11am every day. I never lost a day's work. Ten days after the course was finished, I went on a walking holiday."

Mr Webb's treatment went well and he was told he did not have to return for a check-up for six months. "I'm OK, I feel good," he says. "I can't recommend it too highly."

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Anti-social drinkers: Neil Morrissey and Martin Clunes in *Men Behaving Badly*

The science of making merry

Guinea-pigs in a new study can look forward to a happy new year

RESEARCHERS have been given a grant to investigate whether it is the alcohol or the sociable company which makes people laugh on a night out (Paul Wilkinson writes).

The ten-month project, starting appropriately at new year, will be carried out by a group of psychologists from Hull University, led by Geoff Lowe, a senior lecturer who specialises in the study of pleasure and enjoyment.

His team has been given £4,370 by Arise (Associates for Research into the Science of Enjoyment), an international group of scientists, sponsored by the food and tobacco industries, dedicated to looking at life from a perspective different to that of what Dr Lowe calls "the health police".

His brief is to study the relationship between drinking, laughter and health. The survey will attempt to determine whether it is the drink which leads to laughter, or if people smile simply because they are drinking in a situation where they naturally feel at ease. A major part of the research will be to discover if people's enjoyment is limited by feelings of guilt about over-indulging.

Yesterday Dr Lowe, 53, who lists alcohol and human behaviour among his interests, was already living up to his brief and had left the university for two weeks of Christmas festivities. He said: "Sometimes people consume enjoyable substances, such as

'naughty but nice' food and drink, but feel guilty about it. Such feelings contribute to ill-health. There are now a great many health messages coming to us through the media and this study will help to establish the extent to which pleasurable feelings are mixed up with guilt and the effect that has on health."

He said many people were concerned that they were not enjoying themselves as much as they used to. "Psychologists look at the psycho-social aspects of behaviour. When people drink they usually do it in a social context. That might help you more than the cardiovascular protective effects of the alcohol itself."

Dr Lowe, who was once commissioned to survey drinking among adolescents across Europe, said his team would study 100 volunteers described as a "cross-section of social drinkers".

One of the tests they will undergo is to watch a comedy video in separate groups. Some will be pilled with "controlled" quantities of alcohol while others will get soft drinks. The drinks will be disguised in an effort to ensure the guinea-pigs do not know what is in their glasses. The researchers will then study levels of laughter.

Dr Lowe declined to say what video he planned to use, but said he had used a Steve Martin film during an earlier experiment. "Not everyone laughed," he admitted.

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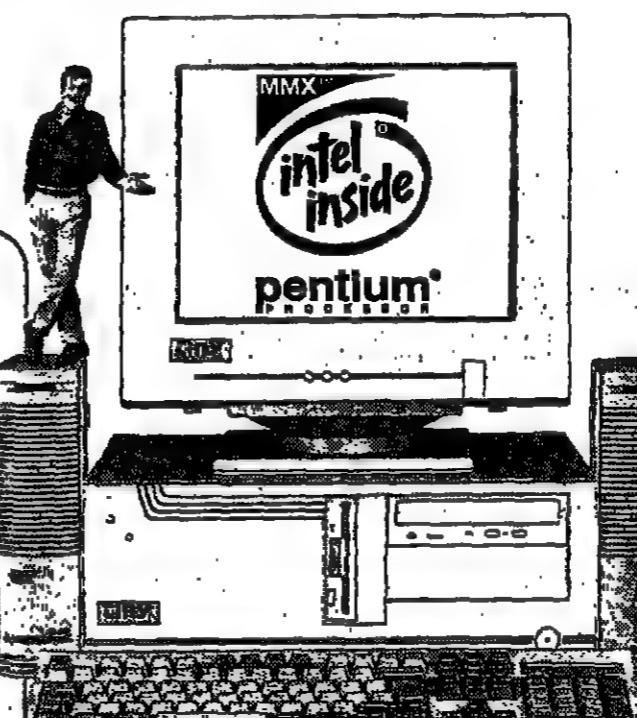
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JPI

Personal portrait of a public man

There's more to Mbeki than meets the media, says Magnus Linklater

It is the fate of those who succeed great men to be judged inadequate to the task. When that great man is Nelson Mandela, disappointment seems almost preordained. How can anyone match those qualities of wisdom and natural warmth that have welded a nation together in the face of impossible odds?

It is perhaps not surprising that Thabo Mbeki, who was elected party leader of the African National Congress this week, has been accorded notices that range from the barely respectful to the niggardly. Shadowy, colourless, secretive, devious — just a few of the words that have peppered recent profiles.

It is hard to equate them with the Thabo Mbeki I know.

I first met him when he was a 20-year-old student at Sussex University, one of the first intake, along with my wife. I remember him from parties where he was an elegant dancer, funny, wonderfully good-looking and in great demand from female undergraduates. There was nothing dubious about this charming, articulate and intelligent young man; his friendship was open and unquestioning.

But even then it was clear that he was more than a footloose exile. He had been entrusted with a mission. As the son of Govan Mbeki, a leading ANC politician, imprisoned along with Mandela after the Rivonia trial, he had been sent abroad to be educated and to keep the anti-apartheid cause at the front of the world's political agenda.

Later, we learnt more about why he had chosen Britain rather than Moscow, the natural home in those days for the ANC. He had been befriended by Anne Yates, a lecturer at Witwatersrand University, who recognised that Mbeki would have to escape from South Africa if he was to avoid the same fate as his father. Thanks to the Anglican monk Aled Stubbings and, in Britain, Lord Ravensdale, a place was found for him at Sussex — a suitably progressive home for a future revolutionary. His education was paid for by Tim Beaumont — now Lord Beaumont of Whitley, the Liberal peer. Back in Johannesburg, when Mbeki received the letter of confirmation from Sussex, he was so thrilled that he snuffed it into his sock to take it home, before being reminded that to be caught with it would mean instant arrest.

After university, he went underground in the service of the ANC, and we saw less of him. He spent some years in Moscow and travelled the world — "From Grimbsy and Exeter to New York and Ulan Bator" as he recalled when he was awarded an honorary degree by Sussex recently.

He would visit us from time to time, turning up unannounced at our house in Islington, usually late at night and accompanied by a "friend" who was never introduced. We would talk and drink late into the night.

But behind the gently mannered reserve, the sharply cut suits and the ever-present pipe, which give Mbeki a British, almost scholarly appearance, one thing is certain: he has remained African through and through. At his wedding, in a stately home in the heart of Surrey, the reception turned into a high-caste tribal ceremony with women dressed in silk, swathed in gold turbans, swaying across the floor of an English drawing room to the rhythms of Xhosa music.

South Africa's new leader thus bridges two worlds, with easy assurance. He may have work to do in order to convince his people that he can fill President Mandela's shoes. But there is no doubt the strengths he brings to the job. As one admirer put it yesterday: "South Africa has struck lucky again."

Deep waters

THE LITERARY estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, has come under legal scrutiny with all the intensity of the detective on the trail of Moriarty. Andrea Reynolds, the former lover of Claus von Bülow who controls much of the author's royalties, has accused her ex-husband of withholding a decade's earnings from the estate. Reynolds gained the estate from her parents who bought it from a bank. She allowed her ex-husband, Sheldon, to handle the rights when they were a couple but now she says he kept £150,000 after they split. He denies this. Both are subject to a legal gag, but she once said: "Every generation takes up with Holmes. The income is up and down but it is regular." When Reynolds last appeared in court, she organised von Bülow's successful appeal against conviction for attempting to murder his heiress wife, Sunny. Jeremy Irons won an Oscar for portraying von Bülow in *Reversal Of Fortune*. Reynolds was



Screen lovers: Baranski; Irons

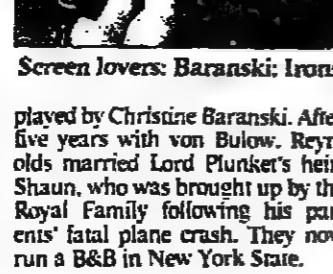


• LABOUR MPs concerned about the gathering confidence of Gordon Brown claim he has a new description of his job: "I am the PM. Tony Blair is the President."

Follow me

SARAH Macaulay, Gordon's friend, demonstrated her familiarity with the Chancellor's residence by offering guests a guided tour at No 11's Christmas party on Thursday. The PR mistress was less amenable to suggestions from a grubby journalist that she follow Blair's footsteps to the altar: "You wish."

More happily, she expressed pride at the speed with which Felix, her cat — expected to move into Downing Street — has adapted to the sunlight. He poses in the window of Macaulay's South London home, awaiting the next batch of cat-crazed snappers. A reflective Chancellor anticipated a Christmas return to Scotland. So little time has he spent there that when he looked out of his Edinburgh window recently, he was horrified to see a row of houses blocking his view: "I didn't even know they had



"Investment in the arts is vital to the future of this country" — Tony Blair, May 1995. This week Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, announced that next year's Arts Council grant would be £184.6 million — £24 million less in real terms than five years ago.

OLD TIMES

space station and he will complete the task with aplomb. Invite him to boldly go on Radio 4's Today and watch him spin dangerously out of orbit. Foale was swallowed up in the black hole that is Broadcasting House after his taxi deposited him at the wrong end of the building. As Michael failed to dock with the fourth-floor studio and wandered helplessly around the wrong floor, producers rushed through an emergency item. With Foale floating towards the Radio 5 sports desk, he was finally rescued and brought down to earth for his live link-up with a relieved nation.

• DAVID Mellor becomes grander by the day. After trading in his wife for a viscountess and buying an expensive pad in the shadow of Tower Bridge, he has grumbled to neighbours for leaving their wheels outside his love nest. The parked cars are breaking no rules but Mellor rang the area's private security force and screamed: "If I had wanted to live on a council estate, I would have bought a council house. The place looks like a 1960s car lot." Let's hope nobody mistakes him for a second-hand car dealer.

Space oddity

SEND Michael Foale, the British-born astronaut, to repair the Mir

NEW TIMES

THE Balkans have decided they need an image makeover. Eight countries think the brand name has become steadily more of a trap since the Balkan crisis. Bulky Balkan sorts (Bosnians, Albanians, Bulgarians etc) want to be known as "South Europeans".

JAPANESE



Gay and dolls: Chris Smith poses with the full Spice rack

Carrington William Waldegrave also showed ("I'm just glad to have an audience"). Lord C praised Hurd's handling of "hangars, floggers, pornographers and Lord Longford" before arriving at the FO "where many think it treasonable to speak to foreigners". Hurd was amused to see Gerald Kaufman, once his shadow. Hurd thought Kaufman "enjoys the role of stage villain and relishes the hisses that accompany his every appearance". Kaufman replied that he hadn't been among so many Tories since he voted for the Government's benefit cuts.

NATURE NOTES



Fig 1

Mistletoe

(*Noelis osculatoris*)

A seasonal plant imbued

with magical properties.



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4

Laugh or the world will jeer
Simon Barnes
on how to grin and bear a joke

I am the first to laugh at a joke against myself but this goes too far. There is not a schoolmaster in creation who has not found these words tumbling from his lips. A total giveaway: and don't his playground-hardened pupils know it? The iron rule of the playground is never to let the bastards know they've touched you, or they'll be at it twice as hard and you will look ten times as big an idiot.

This rule was forgotten this week, if it had ever been learnt, by an unlikely pair of bedfellows: Alan Clark, MP and demon diarist, and Shane Warne, Australian and demon bowler. Clark could not bear being imitated; Warne could not bear being called fat. Playground standards, both, and the wise child always tries — quite literally — to grin and bear it. But not everyone learns in the hard school of the playground: the world is echoing to the sound of toys being hurled from prams.

It was nice of the English legal system to bring us the Clark panto for Christmas. Clark, of course, is taking legal action against the spoof Clark diary in the *Evening Standard*.

Would it be fair to say that you are somewhat obsessed with your personal appearance, your physique and sexual attractiveness? Clark invited such questions by going to court. He may, or may not, have a good legal case, but, by insisting on his credentials as *un homme sérieux*, he has effortlessly made himself a fool. His humourness has undone him.

It is much the same with Warne. Warne is a great cricketer but he cannot bear to be teased. Photographed alongside his warwork, an effigy noticeably slimmer than his current self, he was asked by a reporter which shape he preferred.

The response was pure playground. "That's why I don't answer questions from you blokes. That's it, you've ruined it. Thanks very much." And of Warne stormed.

The famous can surround themselves with toadies, and many do, but no one gets fame on his own terms. Self-mockery is one of the most humanising of traits: it is one that is most conspicuously lacking in sport and politics.

Never let them know they have touched you. A confession: I long to write a letter: "Dear Private Eye, I think you have confused pseudo-intellectual with intellectual." But it does not take a PhD in literature and psychology to work out that the letter would appear beneath the headline "A pseud writes" and I would look a bigger idiot than ever.

Politicians and elite athletes are never taken with the perfect seriousness with which they take themselves. Eric Cantona, the footballer and philosphaster, inspired an industry of teasing volumes. Tony Blair is portrayed as a cynically self-deluding vicar in *Private Eye*.

Blair is fair game: the only defence is indifference. And humour, of course. Mick Quinn, footballer turned racehorse trainer, was called Sumo by racing fans — so he named his horse Sumo Quinn.

Without humour, a person is less than human. Humour is proportion, humour knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, humour is destructive of vanity. Jokes are ever the world's defences against the conspiracy of the vain, the pompous, the humourless. The humourless cannot make jokes: instead, they become jokes. Alan and Shane take us rocking into Christmas week with a spring in our steps and a devilish smirk on our faces.

There's nothing to hide

The Dome is still evolving and to reveal details now would spoil the surprise

Such critics are very British. They "will not kill but will not strive, officiously to keep alive".

The answer to these complaints is simple but frustrating. There is no secrecy about the dome, just incompleteness. That incompleteness is within schedule. An exhibition two years away is not a state secret lying covered in cobwebs in a vault. It is a show evolving. We do not know the BBC's schedule for 2000. We do not know the Queen's Speech for 2000. For that matter, we do not know the outcome of Gerald Kaufman's deliberations before he reaches them.

Those monitoring the spending of money on any creative project might reasonably worry if it is not on time or

on budget. Lottery

money is not tax-payers' money, but it is the public's money,

the distinctive

considered "without a difference". (That

clashes with the original intention

for the National Lottery.) But this is to a quibble. When a dome the size of two Wembleys or 13 Albert Halls is being built with "the public's money" in the capital, the public is entitled to ask what for.

That answer is in the public domain. It has been discussed both by the dome's defenders and by its critics, not least in *The Times* in June 1996. The exhibition is on the theme of time, expressed through humanity's achievements and ambitions. Working this theme into exhibition format and carrying it out to schools and regional centres is the task of designers working within a framework laid down by the company.

At the core of the dome is a large performance space which will serve as an introduction to the exhibition. Round this central arena are three segments: the human mind and body; achievement in the community, industry and the arts (principally British achievement); and the future of the Earth and the human habitat.

The segments are divided into zones or pavilions, each contracted to a different design team. Eleven are currently at work. Thus for the

"body" zone, the designers HP:ICM are constructing a huge model of the human form, its veins and arteries in working order. The "land" design company is creating a "tower of serious play" in which visitors alter the hologram exhibits as they pass them before "choosing" a play-style of their own. In the "work" zone the Park Avenue partnership is building a "valley of the ladders", tracing the career paths of the future. Virtual reality screens take visitors through the future of "the job".

Some of the proposals are already

excellent, some still need development.

They must be both instructive

and fun. Displays will be linked

electronically with

schools and other

centres across the

country. Above all,

they must be ready

on time. Because of

the election hiatus,

these contracts

could not be put

out to tender until after

the Government's

June review. The

bids came in by the autumn and are

now let. There is nothing secret about this. But until the zones are ready in skeleton form, interest from sponsors

cannot be finalised, nor can the

frustration of politicians and public

be assuaged.

This programme is on schedule,

just. The committee naturally wanted,

to see the pavilions. We all do.

But the design teams protest that revealing

unfinished drawings and "work in

progress" achieves only exasperation

and delay. I agree with them. What is

at present planned is a "state-of-play"

presentation by early spring, to meet

the needs of sponsors, the travel

industry and the public. But a degree

of patience is demanded of the

audience of any show. Those managing

a creative activity must be fair to

the creators or they will not get good

work. Pre-emptive criticism

demoralises everyone. This



CRYING CHICKEN

Celebrate human power over disease, not its weakness

The great flu pandemic of 1918-19 sprang upon a world unprepared for a fresh disaster. While eyes were fixed on the final weeks of fighting on the Western Front, a virus that would claim even more lives was beginning its terrible career. In a strange parallel with the slaughter in the trenches, those who died in the pandemic tended to be healthy young adults, not the elderly and infirm who are flu's customary victims. Before the age of antibiotics and flu vaccines, there was often not much that doctors could do.

Today no new flu virus can hope to make its entrance quietly. The trumpets heralding a new pandemic tend to be sounded before the virus responsible has even got its boots on. So sensitive are we to the threat, so sophisticated in detecting it, and so trigger-happy in spreading the news that the danger of crying wolf becomes unavoidable. Flu pandemics occur at unpredictable intervals, but are signalled by abrupt alterations in the virus responsible, which changes its coat so that it can duck under the defences erected by the body's immune system. In light of this knowledge, it is not surprising that the chicken flu virus which has so far infected eight people in Hong Kong, killing two of them, has triggered a minor panic.

It is too soon to say whether anxiety is justified. The evidence so far, however, does not suggest that a pandemic is imminent. For that, an efficient virus which spreads readily between people is needed. The experience in Hong Kong is that only those who have been in close contact with chickens seem to be at risk. True, several members of the same family have been infected; but they all lived with an aged grandmother and could have caught the disease from chickens she acquired, rather than from one another. The slow rise in the number of cases since the first was identified in May is also reassuring, although less is known about what may be going on in mainland China.

DUTCH COURAGE

A message to the war criminals of Bosnia

The two indicted Croatian war criminals arrested by Dutch troops in Bosnia on Thursday are accused of horrific crimes. Vlatko Kupreskic, wounded when he opened fire on the soldiers sent to seize him, is said to have organised one of the worst massacres of the Bosnian war, killing Muslim women and children and setting alight the village of Ahmici in 1993. Ante Gotovina commanded a Bosnian Croat paramilitary unit and is accused of allowing a prisoner to be raped while he conducted an interrogation. They are now in the custody of the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, where slow attempts are under way to confront the most notorious killers with their crimes.

The Dutch raid sends out two important messages — to the sullen communities in Bosnia still harbouring known war criminals, and to The Netherlands, one of the contributing powers to the Nato-led Stabilisation Force (Sfor). The raid will remind Bosnians, and especially Bosnian Serbs, that although the Nato effort to apprehend named suspects has so far been poor, the allies have no intention of simply forgetting about past atrocities. The raid came only hours before President Clinton announced an open-ended extension of the American troop presence in Bosnia. Washington has long insisted that a rapid round-up of the leading suspects is a precondition for normalisation. That pressure will continue. British special forces made clear in Prijevor last July that Nato would use search squads if there was no voluntary surrender. The Hague tribunal has publicly indicted 78 suspects; the 50 at large cannot count on continuing Nato inaction.

The message that the troops sent back to their own country was equally trenchant.

THE SIBLING FACTOR

A celebrity relation brings the spotlight but few perks

While Ffion Jenkins's sister, Manon, accompanied her down the aisle yesterday, Cherie Booth's half-sister, Lauren, prepared to relaunch herself as a newspaper columnist. As Valerie Grove reports in her interview with the Prime Minister's sister-in-law on page 17, "She has no wish to trade on her family connections". But being a close relative of the most powerful person in the land leaves her little choice.

So far Ms Booth has been admirably discreet, revealing only her brother-in-law's skill at making Maytime sandwiches. But it is a fair guess that, had she merely been an obscure actress with no links to No 10, her telephone would not be ringing 20 to 30 times a day with offers from television, newspapers and magazines.

As Terry Major-Ball, the former Prime Minister's brother, points out, having a relative in Downing Street requires strong self-discipline. Any indiscretion will be leapt upon. His advice to Lauren is never to drink more than two glasses of wine. Tony Blair will surely be relieved if she takes it. Seen from the other end of the telescope, siblings can be an embarrassing liability, as both Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton discovered.

Once upon a time, rulers could simply give their brothers jobs. Jack Kennedy made his brother Attorney-General. Napoleon dished out kingdoms to most of his family: Louis became King of Holland; Jerome, King of Westphalia, and Joseph, King of

It is, nevertheless, entirely proper to take the threat seriously. If chicken flu does become a pandemic, it could sweep across the world in months, in which case it is unlikely that a vaccine could be developed in time. But it is also possible that it could take a year or more to reach its peak, as did the last major flu epidemic to emerge from Hong Kong in 1968. In that case, speed now could ensure that a vaccine is ready in time to blunt the impact. Only one caution needs to be entered: transporting the virus around the world to develop the vaccine is itself not without risks. It may not be lethal to human beings, but it certainly is to birds, and Britain's farmers already have more than enough problems without flocks of chickens and turkeys dropping dead overnight.

The flurry over chicken flu raises issues of its own. Like the "flesh-eating bug" and Ebola virus, it has so far lacked much of its alleged substance. Flu worries are not entirely a media creation, although the media certainly amplify them. They reflect, rather, an increasing mood of public anxiety at a time when most real risks are declining. Life expectancy is increasing, the risks of death from most kinds of accident are falling, and the threat of nuclear war no longer hangs over us. Yet few people would admit to worrying less, and most worry more, than they used to.

The phenomenon has been well explored by the sociologist Frédéric Furetié in his recent book *The Culture of Fear*. The reasons for the change are many: constant nannying advice from well-meaning public bodies certainly has something to do with it. But with modern antibiotics, the opportunity to detect a new outbreak of flu on the basis of a single case, humans should celebrate their power, not fear their weakness. By comparison, the victims of the 1918-19 pandemic really did have something to worry about.

'New imperialism' of Bosnia mission

From Mr George Kenney

Sir, I thought Simon Jenkins's article on Bosnia ("Ulster of the Balkans", December 17) quite excellent. While I completely agree with the points he makes about international efforts to bring democracy to Bosnia — something it has never had, not from the Austrian Empire up through Tito's semi-Stalinist system — there is another aspect to international efforts which the barely touches upon and which most critics ignore completely.

Leaders of all the factions in Bosnia have strong economic incentives not to solve their problems, but to maintain the international presence. We're talking about a lot of money. Most Americans, for example, have no idea that in fiscal year 1998 the US will spend over \$3.7 billion in Bosnia (according to recent testimony to Congress by the Government Accounting Office).

Compare that to total US aid to Sub-Saharan Africa in 1997, a paltry \$1.4 billion, which in per capita terms works out to about \$1.20 a head in Bosnia and \$3 a head in Africa.

Or look at the \$3.7 billion compared to the total discretionary spending in the US foreign policy budget, about \$11-12 billion. The US is spending roughly one third as much in Bosnia as for all foreign policy operations (though these are different accounts).

All this is a huge windfall for the Bosnians. And it seems from my vantage point in Washington that nobody at the State Department is thinking in terms of the actual implementation problems — nobody seems to realize that we are feeding the Bosnians' habit for subsidies.

I agree completely with Jenkins about the new imperialism. While I would have fewer reservations about it if we were honest with ourselves and called it what it is, I find it quite grotesque that Western governments seem to adopt totalitarian techniques, both with the Bosnians and our own Western publics.

But if we impose an Orwellian world abroad, how long before it comes back to haunt us at home as well? Philosophically this is a most troubling situation.

Cordially yours,
GEORGE KENNEY
State Department Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, January-August 1992.
4620 36th Street, NW,
Washington, DC 20008.
gkenney@idsonline.com
December 17.

From the Executive Director of Children's Aid Direct

Sir, Simon Jenkins refers to "mission creep" in his article about British troops in Bosnia. This is set in the context of Nam planning for a reduced force, 20,000 troops, with a mission review to be undertaken every six months.

Of course the remit has changed; it always does. Protecting aid convoys became policing the ceasefire and that then becomes assisting the gradual rehabilitation of civil order.

Likewise aid-agency work moves on from immediate emergency relief to rehabilitation and then, where relevant, development. Both the military protection force and the aid agency role change as does the nature of the need. Both then face decisions about when to pull out.

Field visits indicate for us that the effects of the war are still active. The civil population is still fragile. Welfare systems are still limited. This is the reason why a "slim-down" force must remain.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID H. W. GRUBB,
Executive Director,
Children's Aid Direct,
12 Portman Road, Reading RG30 1EA.
December 17.

War and the media

From Mr Miles Hudson

Sir, Perhaps I may be permitted a wry smile when I and my fellow author, John Stander, are described by Martin Bell (*Book review on War and the Media*, December 11) as retired men who "seem to yearn for a world from which the media are excluded".

Our age we cannot deny; but when we conclude that the media "should continue to probe, to expose abuses, to widen horizons, to criticise when necessary and to give support when this is justified (p52)", it seems that our other findings as to the accuracy of media reporting are well-founded.

Yours faithfully,
MILES HUDSON,
The Priors Farm,
Mattingley, Hook,
Nr Basingstoke RG27 8JU.
December 13.

Commons votes

From Mr Alan Pavelin

Sir, Mr Richard Bristow (letter, December 12) suggests secret ballots in the House of Commons.

The whole point of open voting is that MPs are accountable to us, their electors. If, on any issue, the way they vote were kept secret, how could we possibly assess whether to vote for them next time?

Yours faithfully,
ALAN PAVELIN,
172 Lessons Hill,
Chiswick BR7 6QL.
December 12.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Britain closer to a classless society?

From Mrs Maureen Bridge

Sir, The new eight occupational definitions proposed in the survey of classes commissioned by the Office for National Statistics (report, December 13) demonstrates that John Major's dream of Britain becoming a classless society has come much closer to being a reality.

What Major surely meant was equality of opportunity across the classes. It has not quite happened yet; to become a barrister still requires money as well as ability, and those living in areas of poor housing, poor schools and who are short of money are still more likely to be unemployed or doing elementary work.

Nevertheless teachers and nurses, company directors, doctors and City whiz-kids now come from a wide spectrum of backgrounds. A public schoolboy can become a car mechanic, a child born in a corner grocer's shop can become Prime Minister and a retired bank manager can be a part-time gardener without raising an eyebrow.

That, surely, is what John Major meant.

Yours sincerely,
MAUREEN BRIDGE,
4 Watts Road,
Tavistock PL19 8LF.
December 13.

From Professor P. E. Secker

Deputy Secretary of the Institution of Electrical Engineers

Sir, I was coherence to read in your account of the report commissioned by the Office for National Statistics that "technical and managerial occupations such as engineers" (my italics) have been classified as "associate professionals" and included in the second of the eight proposed denominations.

Role of EU spokesmen

From the Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister

Sir, I am well aware of the difference in the role of the spokesman of an EU member state and the role played by spokesmen of the member state that holds the EU presidency (report and leading article, December 19). At last week's Luxembourg summit, British government spokesmen played the former role, while a robust debate was going on about Euro X inside the council chamber. In the next six months we will play the latter role, mindful of the different needs of different nations' media, all of which require the polite and professional service they will get.

In Luxembourg there was no rudeness on my part, though I did engage in vigorous debate with journalists — almost all British — who did not believe Euro X was a fight worth having. I have no knowledge of the alleged incident between a Swedish journalist and an unnamed "British briefer", quoted in your leading article. Nor do I recall any exchange with service they will get.

Criticise all you will. During the British presidency we intend to show a good face of Britain to the rest of Europe and a good face of Europe to Britain. We do not intend to waste our opportunity.

Yours sincerely,
ALASTAIR CAMPBELL,
Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street, SW1A 2AA.
December 19.

The next Archbishop

From the General Secretary of the Modern Churchpeople's Union

Sir, You report that the identity of the next Archbishop of Canterbury is already all but known, barring the actual announcement, in the Tropican personage of the present Bishop of London (article, "Set for Lambeth walk", Weekend, December 13).

I suggest that your correspondent is a little premature in his assumptions. I would call to mind in this case the pertinent old Roman saying: "He who enters the conclave a Pope exits a cardinal."

Further, serious consideration must be given to the future role and status of the Archbishop of Canterbury, not simply as Primate of All England, with its eccentricities, but as occupant of the most senior see in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The next incumbent may be chosen from outside these islands and, if that is the case, engaging Victorian characteristics will be irrelevant.

Yours sincerely,
NICHOLAS HENDERSON,
General Secretary,
Modern Churchpeople's Union,
25 Birch Grove, W3 9SP.
December 13.

Exchange control rules

From Sir Michael Edwards

Sir, Anyone skipping through December 18's front-page report by Dominic Kennedy ("Robinson was accused of breaching exchange control rules") would be forgiven for thinking that I had made a major contribution to the content. I would point out that my response to the journalist (in writing) was as follows:

I refer to the statement you have read to me, made by Mr Arthur Large, who was Company Secretary of BL when I was Chairman.

I confirm that I visited the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England in the company of the Company Secretary. The meeting was arranged at my request, some months after Exchange Control was abolished. Matters discussed were confidential then, and as far as I'm concerned remain so.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL EDWARDS,
15 Woodlark Street,
Chelsea SW3 4DL.
December 18.

I understand this to be an oversimplified interpretation of the proposals.

The correct position for professionally qualified engineers — as opposed to the technicians involved in, for instance, the servicing of domestic equipment — is, of course, in Class 1, along with doctors, lawyers and scientists.

Engineering is a highly creative, innovative and professional calling, involving superior fiscal and functional responsibilities. Recent surveys show that engineers command salaries equal to or greater than those of most other professionals and have similar or even longer training periods.

Engineering is a highly creative, innovative and professional calling, involving superior fiscal and functional responsibilities. Recent surveys show that engineers command salaries equal to or greater than those of most other professionals and have similar or even longer training periods.

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP SECKER,
Deputy Secretary,
Institution of Electrical Engineers,
Savoy Place, WC2R 0BL.
December 18.

From Mr Jonathan Owen

Sir, You report the proposed reclassification of people into eight social classes.

As the owner of a country hotel, with a degree, who often undertakes many of the menial tasks associated with the day-to-day running of the business, I fit into every class group except class 8 (unemployed/disabled).

As I am also a local Conservative branch chairman, may I now rejoice in John Major's dream, having achieved my own classlessness in society?

Regards,
JONATHAN OWEN,
Wold House, Nafferton,
East Yorkshire YO25 0LD.
woldhouse@compuserve.com
December 18.

From Mrs Susan Kelly

Sir, Your front-page headline, "Father Christmas's reputation hangs by a whisker", raises the question of why people continue to tell their children these pointless lies.

I remember vividly as a small child being unable to understand why my parents supposedly the kindest and most loving people in my life, didn't give me a Christmas present, when this complete stranger from Lapland in a red coat did.

Time to pension Santa off.

Yours faithfully,

SUSAN KELLY,
227 Popes Lane, W5 4NH.
December 15.

From Mr Nigel R. MacNicol

Sir, Libby Purves, as always a fount of common sense, makes the point that terrified infants should not be forced

on to Santa's knee for the gratification of parents ("Let Santa be child's play", December 16), but should there not be a maximum age for visits to Father Christmas?

Junior school teachers know that by the age of seven most children are longing for the chance to pull Santa's beard and demonstrate to gullible parents that the old man is a fraud. Should Santa be exposed to this peril?

Yours faithfully,
NIGEL MACNICOL,
9 Church Lane, Greatham,
Cuckham LE15 7NF.
December 16.

Santa bearded in the line of duty

From Mrs Hilary Corfan

Sir, In a week when we have seen news footage of tiny children scavenging on Bosnian rubbish tips to survive I find it hard to sympathise with parents who complain of their children's lost innocence on discovering the truth about Santa (reports, December 15 and 18).

The magic of Santa Claus is important to tiny infants but the parents of older (and one would hope wiser) children should show them that



COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM,
NORFOLK

December 19: The Queen arrived at Grantham Railway Station this morning and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire (Mr Timothy Brooks).

Her Majesty, Colonel-in-Chief, The Queen's Royal Lancers, drove to Belvoir Castle and was received by the Duke and Duchess of Rutland, the Colonel of the Regiment (Lieutenant General Sir Richard Swinburn) and Lieutenant Colonel Rudi Wertheim (Commanding Officer).

The Queen was received with a Royal Salute and subsequently visited the Regimental Museum, before attending a Reception with serving and retired soldiers and their families.

Afterwards Her Majesty honoured the Colonel of The Queen's Royal Lancers with her presence at a Lunch given by the Duke of Rutland to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of her Colony-in-Chief.

The Queen was represented by Princess Alexandra.

Hon Lady Ogilvy at the Funeral of the Hon Lady Rowley (Extra Lady in Waiting to Princess Alexandra, the Hon Lady Ogilvy) which was held in St Mary's Church, Stoke By Nayland, Suffolk, this morning.

The Prince of Wales was represented by the Lord Lamaché.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

December 19: The Prince of Wales, Patron, today visited the Bristol Cancer Help Centre, Grove House, Cornhill Grove, Clifton, Bristol.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

The Emperor and Empress of Japan will pay a state visit to Britain from Tuesday, May 26 to Friday, May 29, 1998. They will stay at Buckingham Palace.

Emperor Hirohito and the Empress paid a State Visit to the United Kingdom in October 1971. The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh paid a State Visit to Japan in May 1975.

Dinner

Royal Society of St George

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayors, accompanied by the Sheriffs and their ladies, attended a Christmas dinner of the City of London branch of the Royal Society of St George held last night at the Mansion House. Mr George Todrovich, chairman, presided. The Lord Mayor, Mr Anthony Scrivenor, QC, and the Rev Basil Watson also spoke. Among others present were:

The Ambassador of Tunisia, the Lord Provost, London, and Lord Verney, Lady Scott-Moncrieff, M and Mrs Edward Scott-Moncrieff, M and Mrs Alderman and Mrs Richard Agutter, Sir Edward Becher, Mr Todrovich, Mr Peter Tait, Mr Peter Tait, the Company and the Patemakers Company. The President of the Friends of the City Liver Club and Mrs Stalhorth.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Bill Abbott, former Governor, Pentonville prison; 56; Miss Jenny Agutter, actress; 45; Mr Michael Beaumont, Seigneur of Sark; 70; Lord Brabazon of Tara; 52; Mr Simon Channing, former chairman, London Philharmonic; 37; Sir George Coldstream, QC, 90; Mr Malcolm Cooper, marksman; 51; Mr Charles Denton, television and film producer; 60; Mr D.F. Gardner, chairman, Briton Estate, 54.

The Earl of Harewood, 75; Mrs Rose Hippisley, chief executive and Registrar, General Dental Council; 48; Lord Howe of Aberavon, CH, QC; 71; My Justice Lightman, 58; Baroness Thomas of Walliswood; 62; Miss Rachel Trickett, former Principal, St Hugh's College, Oxford; 74; Mr John Whittle, former director-general, IBA; 51; Mr John Wilkins, Editor, *The Tatler*, 61.

MORROW: Mr F.G. Berkeley, former Chief Taxing Master of the Supreme Court; 78; Mr B.E.S. Collins, former chairman, Nabisco Group; 74; Miss Chris Evert, tennis 64.

**BMDS: 0171 680 6880
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000**

With difficulty we guess even at things on earth, and laboriously find out what lies beyond the grave. But who has ever treaded out what is in heaven? Wisdom of Solomon 9: 16

BIRTHS

WENSTANLEY - On December 14th at The Portland Hospital, to Andrew and Sophie, a son, Max Alexander.

BROOKES - On 11th December 1997, in Paris, to Mary (née Oliver), and Nicholas, a son, Oliver, 1.

CAYLEY - On December 14th at The Portland Hospital, to Andrew and Sophie, a son, Max Alexander.

CUNNINGHAM - On December 10th at The Portland Hospital, to Michaeline (née Cunnigham), a son, Max Alexander.

EVANS - On December 15th at The Portland Hospital, to Deborah (née Logan) and David, a son, Michael, a brother to Emily.

GLEASON - On December 14th at The Portland Hospital, to Heather and Tom, a son, Oliver, a brother to two Christmas presents ever.

GOLD - On December 12th at The Portland Hospital, to Angela and Nigel, a son, Ethan, a brother to Jonathan.

KYFFIN - On December 12th at The Portland Hospital, to Nicky (née James) and Daniel, a son, Harry Thomas, Jonathan.

PALTRIDGE - On 17th December, to Mary (née Galpin) and James, a daughter, Amelia Sophie.

FATER - On December 17th at The Portland Hospital, to Michael and Daniel, to Nitish and Sali, a daughter, Neha.

SCARANCHI - On December 2nd at The Portland Hospital, to Eva (née Ferraro) and Mark, a precious daughter, Esha.

STOYLE - On December 12th at The Portland Hospital, to Midori and Daniel, a daughter, Katherine Leyla.

WEATHERS - Vincent and Marlene are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Henry John, born on Saturday 13th December 1997 at The Matilda Hospital, Hong Kong.



Laura Powell and Toby Simmonds of Barons Court, West London, who recently announced their engagement

Weekend anniversaries

TODAY

BIRTHS: John Wilson Croker, politician and writer, Galway, 1780; Sir Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia 1939-41 and 1949-63; Jepart, Victoria, 1894; George, Duke of Kent, Sandringham House, Norfolk, 1902.

DEATHS: Ambrose Pare, surgeon, Paris, 1609; Eric von Ludendorff, German First World War general, Munich, 1937; James Hilton, novelist, Long Beach, California, 1954; John Steinbeck, novelist, Nobel laureate 1962, New York, 1968; Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, Prime Minister of Spain 1973, assassinated, Madrid, 1973; Bobby Darin, singer, songwriter and actor, Hollywood, 1973; Arthur Rubinstein, pianist, Geneva, 1982.

The first General Assembly of

the Church of Scotland, 1560.

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was proclaimed President of France, 1848.

TOMORROW

BIRTHS: Jean Racine, dramatist, La Ferte-Milon, 1639; Robert Moffat, missionary, Ormiston, East Lothian, 1795; Sir Joseph Whitworth, Bt, mechanical engineer, Stockport, 1863; Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaufort, Prime Minister 1808 and 1874-80, London, 1881; Archibald Campbell Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1869-82, Edinburgh, 1881; Joseph Stalin, Soviet leader, Gori, Georgia, 1878; Dame Rebecca West, novelist and critic, London, 1892.

DEATHS: Giovanni Boccaccio, writer, Certaldo, Italy, 1375; Catherine of Braganza, Queen consort of Charles II.

Lisbon, 1705; James Parkinson, physician, London, 1824; F. Scott Fitzgerald, novelist, Hollywood, 1940; George Patton, American general of the Second World War, Heidelberg, Germany, 1945; Gladys Ripley, contralto, Chichester, 1955; Lewis Terman, psychologist, Palo Alto, California, 1956; Eric Coates, composer, London, 1957; Sir John (Jack) Hobbs, cricketer, Hove, 1963.

The Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1620.

Robert Liston used an anaesthetic (ether) for the first time in a British operation, University College Hospital, London, 1846.

A Pan American jumbo jet blew up and crashed on the Scottish border town of Lockerbie killing 270 people, 1988.

Church news

Appointments

The Rev John Ayling, Team Reitor, Boscombe, 2 Davidson Street (Truro); to be also Rural Dean of Stratton (same diocese).

The Rev Simon Baker, Vicar, Shinfield St Mary (Oxford); to be Lay Ministry Adviser and Warden of Readers (Winchester).

The Rev Anne Ballard, Precentor and Chaplain, Christ Church Cathedral (Oxford); to be Priest-in-Charge, Merton St Mary the Virgin w/ Pinstone and Stapton (same diocese).

The Rev Hugh Beaven, Vicar, The George St Augustine (Chelmsford); to be Priest-in-Charge, St Bede-on-Sea, St Thomas w/ St Lawrence, and also Chaplain, St Peter's Chapel on the Wall, and Industrial Chaplain, Denebie Peninsula (same diocese).

The Rev Andrew Couch, Vicar, St Ives (Truro); to be Priest-in-Charge, Halstead St John in the Field (same diocese).

The Rev David Hiscock, Team Vicar, Swan (Oxford); to be Team Rector, Swan (same diocese).

Forthcoming marriages

Mr C.R.G. Clarke and Miss O.L.N. Stevens

The engagement is announced between Christopher, son of Mr and Mrs Hugh Clarke, of Ballykeel, Co. Antrim, and Olivia, younger daughter of the Reverend Richard and Mrs Stevens of Stockton, Kent.

Mr J.H. Higgs and Miss A.D. Metcalfe

The engagement is announced between John Hamden Higgs, of Ellingham Junction, Surrey, and Angela Denise Metcalfe, of Guildford, Surrey.

Mr K.M. Mead and Mrs C.M. Lancashire

The engagement is announced between Kenneth, younger son of the Rev and Mrs C.H. Mead, of Bournemouth, Dorset, and Catherine, daughter of Mrs M.L. Norris, MBE, of Barnes, London.

Mr R.D. Parry and Miss A.Y. McAuley

The engagement is announced between Darren, only son of Mr and Mrs Peter Wilding, of Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, and Anna, daughter of Mr and Mrs George McAuley, of Wrea Green, Lancashire.

Latest wills

Leo Willis of Edgbaston, Birmingham, left estate valued at £233,087 net.

He left £25,000 to the Birmingham Children's Fund, £10,000 to the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation, £5,000 each to Barnardos, RNLI, Birmingham Children's Hospital, British Heart Foundation and Multiple Sclerosis Society.

The Rev Hugh Beaven, Vicar, The George St Augustine (Chelmsford); to be Priest-in-Charge, St Bede-on-Sea, St Thomas w/ St Lawrence, and also Chaplain, St Peter's Chapel on the Wall, and Industrial Chaplain, Denebie Peninsula (same diocese).

Barbara Hedwig Habermann, widow, of Coningsby Wood, Bingley, West Yorkshire, left estate valued at £1,565,217 net.

Doris Grangebook, of Bramdean, Alresford, Hampshire, left estate valued at £1,824,056 net.

Jan Kazimira Nagajewski, of London W8, left estate valued at £1,31,817 net.

Michael Jackson in Milan earlier this year



ON THIS DAY

December 20, 1991

It was a mixed, but successful, day at the auction houses with sales ranging from a glove belonging to Michael Jackson to an ancient grandfather clock found in a Yorkshire cowshed.

Meanwhile at Sotheby's in London, a Georgian mahogany grandfather clock, discovered in the cowshed of a farm near Huddersfield, sold for £11,000 yesterday.

It was above its estimate of £4,000-5,000.

It was in what the saleroom described as a "distressed condition". The movement was black and rusty but complete. The condition attracted buyers because it was still original.

The farmer had been astonished by the estimate and was said to be overwhelmed by the final price. Sotheby's was asked for an opinion on the clock.

which had been in the cowshed with other old junk for at least 50 years.

The farmer told a Sotheby's representative that he did not think the 7ft 5in tall clock was valuable but the expert identified it as being the work of Benjamin Gray and Justin Villiamy, and made around 1750.

The sale totalled £395,318 with 29.84 per cent bought in. The top lot was a rare gold and tortoise shell quartz repeating calendar clockwatch by Thomas Mudge, one of the most respected and versatile makers of the 18th century which sold for £24,000.

Six years on from 1991 Michael Jackson is as popular a world star as he was then, as the picture of him singing at a packed San Siro stadium in Milan this summer makes clear. He has survived, despite rumours and accusations of possible child abuse, marrying and swiftly divorcing Lisa Marie Presley, and marrying again and producing a child. Mr Spock, however, along with Captain Kirk and the old trekies, has been retired from the latest Star Trek series.

PERSONAL COLUMN

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NOTICE

OBITUARIES

LILLIAN DISNEY

Lillian Disney, philanthropist and widow of Walt Disney, died on December 16 in Los Angeles aged 98. She was born in 1899.

Lillian Disney's greatest contribution to the animation empire founded by her husband Walt occurred not in a boardroom, but on a cross-country train. It was while travelling from New York to California in the 1920s that Disney, creator of a studio then experiencing financial stresses, gave birth to a cartoon character he hoped would help the business to recover from recent setbacks. He named him Mortimer Mouse, and as he always did, bounced the idea off his wife.

"Not Mortimer," responded Lillian. "It's too formal. How about Mickey?" In that instant an empire was born, one largely built on the goodwill created by an animated mouse with a high-pitched voice and a smile.

One of the most recognizable of Hollywood icons, Mickey Mouse remains the universal symbol for the now much diversified Disney company. When President Nixon awarded Lillian Disney a gold commemorative medal honouring her husband in 1969, it was etched with a profile of Walt Disney on one side and Mickey Mouse on the other.

Yet Mickey Mouse was not Lillian Disney's only lasting contribution to the family business. Although she shunned the spotlight and never joined the Hollywood circuit, her influence was felt in every corner of the Disney empire, and in later life, in her hometown of Los Angeles as well.

Lillian Bounds was born in Spalding, Idaho, the tenth child of Jeanne and Willard Bounds. She grew up in Lapwai on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, where her father worked for the Government as a blacksmith and Federal Marshal.

In 1923 she struck out for Los Angeles to join a sister, Hazel, and found work as a \$15-a-week "inker" of film frames at the Disney studio. She met the studio chief Walt Disney soon after her arrival, and married him on July 13, 1925. During the studio's ascendancy Lillian chose to remain in the background and let her husband become the public face of Disney. Yet she was always present in an unofficial capacity, visiting the



Walt and Lillian Disney, and the famous Mickey Mouse image which owes its name to her inspiration



Disney offices regularly and issuing strong opinions on company decisions when she was asked.

In particular she functioned as Walt Disney's personal sounding board, and it was she who approved plans to create a theme park called "Disneyland", and gave the green light to an animated feature about a fairytale character called Snow White. Her nephew Roy Disney described his aunt as loving but tough, a true pioneer and partner of her husband. "If life had required them to pull the wagon train across the country, they'd have done it," he said of their partnership.

Only once did Lillian Disney speak

out publicly about family matters. Following the publication of the biography *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*, by Marc Eliot, which alleged that Walt Disney was an FBI informant and that their marriage was rocky, she denied the charges, saying they were fabricated.

After the death of her mogul husband in 1966, Lillian Disney adopted a new role, that of philanthropist. She founded the California Institute of the Arts, and donated \$50 million for the construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, which is to be the home of the Los Angeles

Philharmonic.

According to the project's architect, Frank Gehry, she was very specific in her insistence that the hall be for the masses not the elite, and insisted it be surrounded by gardens, because she loved flowers. The hall's opening has been delayed by financial shorthands and is now scheduled for 2001.

In 1990 Lillian Disney received the Governor's Award for the Arts in recognition of her contributions to the arts in California, and last year she donated \$100,000 to her childhood friends, the Nez Perce tribe who remarked: "When I see Cecil Kennedy's pictures I can smell the flowers and hear the hum

of bees."

She noticed that he had painted a ladybird on a flower stem. Thereafter all his paintings contained a ladybird. Lord Thomson of Fleet, a friend and patron, wrote about him and commented that "his pictures conveyed a joy of life and artistic creativity".

Cecil

Kennedy

CECIL KENNEDY

Cecil Kennedy, painter, died on December 12 aged 92. He was born on February 4, 1905.

CECIL KENNEDY will be best remembered for his accurate and appealing depictions of flowers, although he also worked as a portraitist. His best works, many of them produced during the 1960s, are admired for their exquisite detail and artful composition. His wife Winifred created the brilliant flower arrangements, usually in a vase from their collection of mid-18th-century Waterford vases, which continually inspired his work.

Cecil Kennedy was born into a large artistic Victorian family. He was the youngest of 13 children. His grandfather was an artist who had lived in France, sketched with *Corot*, and exchanged drawings with him. His father was a landscape painter and four of his brothers were artists. His brother Charles, who died in the flu epidemic of 1918, was a particular influence on him. In the early 1920s he met and married Winifred Aves. She became his inspiration and for 64 years they worked together as a creative team.

In the Second World War he was called up and fought with 21st Company during the North West Europe campaign.

He was in Antwerp during the winter of 1944, where he sought out and befriended Flemish painters.

The opportunity to study Flemish and Dutch still-life paintings in their natural setting brought about a definite change in his own painting style. He maintained contact with Flemish artists up to his death.

Kennedy had many important patrons. Queen Mary bought his work, as did the Duke of Windsor and the Astors. Queen Mary once remarked: "When I see Cecil Kennedy's pictures I can smell the flowers and hear the hum



Summer Flowers: a typical Kennedy still-life

champion Kennedy as an unsurpassed contemporary master of his genre, blending botanical accuracy and sensual effects.

Kennedy's artful juxtapositions of modern exotic hybrid blooms and humble favourites such as field grasses, as well as the plant species celebrated in the works of the Old Masters, revealed his knowledgeability as a plantsman as well as an artist.

While studying in the great national collections of the major artistic centres, London, Paris, Antwerp and Zurich, he fell under the influence of the Old Masters, from whom he derived his meticulous technique.

The novelty of his all-white arrangements reflected an awareness of 20th-century horticultural innovations as well, such as Vita Sackville-West's "white garden" at Sissinghurst.

He is survived by his wife, Winifred, and a son.

FRANCIS PAUDRAS

Francis Paudras, jazz fan, committed suicide on November 26 aged 62. He was born in 1935.

ALONG with the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter — a member of the Rothschild dynasty and confidante of Charlie Parker — Francis Paudras earned a place in jazz history as the devoted guardian of a wayward talent. His close friendship with the ill-starred pianist Bud Powell during the musician's years in exile in Paris was to form the basis of the semi-fictionalised film *Round Midnight* (1986).

Aptly described by the American expatriate musician Mike Zwerin as "the kind of dedicated jazz fan only France can produce", Paudras was an accomplished amateur pianist and graphic designer who took Powell under his wing,

and brought a sense of order to his chaotic life. In his care, Powell — an alcoholic who had long displayed increasing symptoms of schizophrenia — returned to something approaching full health and even began writing anew.

Paudras subsequently organised his idol's return to New York for a residency at the renowned Birdland club. Circumstances forced the two men apart at that stage, and although he had been due to return to Paris, Powell eventually stayed on in New York, slipping deeper into alcoholism and psychological disarray before his death, at the age of just 41.

One of the founders of modern jazz piano in the 1940s, Powell was a mercurial improviser who adapted many of Charlie Parker's rhythmic innovations to the

keyboard. Drink and drugs were, however, a constant ingredient in the frenetic crucible of bebop, and many of the inner circle followed Parker to an early grave.

Powell's drink problem was compounded by mental disorders. He was admitted to an institution shortly after being beaten over the head in a fracas with police in 1945; during subsequent stays in hospital he was subjected to electric-shock treatment. By the mid-1950s the effects of his dissipations were clearly apparent in his playing.

In 1959 he emigrated to Paris, regarded as a city where black American musicians and artists could live with a greater measure of dignity.

His performances were well-received, but his life grew turbulent despite the efforts to keep him in order of his

increasingly exasperated wife Altevia (known to intimates as Buttercup).

Many of Powell's friends resented Altevia's authoritarian hold over her husband, whom they regarded as virtually a prisoner in his own hotel room, dependent on his wife for his spending money. Paudras, a longstanding admirer of Powell's work, later recalled that he often saw him on Boulevard St Germain "begging like a bum to buy a drink". Overweight and unapproachable, Powell was prone to staring trance-like silently at the wall, his fingers at arm's length.

Paudras made his decisive intervention 1963, when Powell fell seriously ill with tuberculosis. One of the pianist's neighbours, the saxophonist Johnny Griffin, helped to persuade Altevia to allow her

husband to move in with the young Frenchman. Powell spent a long period in hospital; Paudras is said to have taken three years to pay off the \$50-a-day bill for treatment.

He devoted himself to his new house-guest. "For about seven months" he later recalled, "he hardly spoke a word to us except to ask for the butter or something ... We would eat in complete silence, other times he'd stay in his room." Powell began to recover. Paudras even appears to have managed to keep the pianist's fellow drinkers at arm's length.

Twenty years after Powell's death, the gregarious Paudras — who enjoyed close friendships with several other musicians — had the rare satisfaction of seeing his younger self recreated on the cinema screen in *Round Midnight*, the reverential depiction of the expatriate jazz life by the director Bertrand Tavernier. The larger-than-life saxophonist Dexter Gordon played the central character, Dale Turner, an ailing saxophonist modelled on Powell and the equally troubled Lester Young.

Paudras published a memoir, *Round Midnight*, in 1997.

He had then fallen away from giving credit to his co-writer, the pianist Michel Legrand, and the two men had not spoken since. The Legrand gave notice under the provisions of his 1954 contract that the credits must state details, in writing, of the date when the work was delivered to the record label. The record label, the French magazine *Music & Dance*, has agreed to do this.

The Legrand is also to receive a share of the royalties in full.

Twenty years ago, the above-named companies were placed in voluntary liquidation, and the record label, *Round Midnight*, was appointed liquidator.

The Legrand gave notice under the provisions of his 1954 contract that the credits must state details, in writing, of the date when the work was delivered to the record label. The record label, the French magazine *Music & Dance*, has agreed to do this.

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Losses across the board for equities

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

High	Low	Change	Price	%	Yield	PE
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
544	527	-17	48	121		
626	602	-24	59	121		
752	697	-55	10.9	12.4		
753	674	-79	9.5	12.4		
1000	924	-76	10.5	12.4		
1020	940	-80	5.5	12.4		
1200	1150	-50	20.5	12.4		
1201	1150	-50	2.1	12.4		
1205	1205	-50	1.5	12.4		
1209	1209	-50	1.5	12.4		
1209A	1209A	-50	1.5	12.4		
BANKS						
1227	1195	-32	27.9	12.5		
1230	1185	-45	27.5	12.5		
1231	1185	-45	27.5	12.5		
1232	1232	-50	25.5	12.5		
1233	1233	-50	25.5	12.5		
1234	1234	-50	25.5	12.5		
1235	1235	-50	25.5	12.5		
1236	1236	-50	25.5	12.5		
1237	1237	-50	25.5	12.5		
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HOT SEAT 26

Man from the
Pru faces his
toughest test

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

BUSINESS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 20 1997

WEEKEND MONEY SECTION 2

Eurotunnel negotiates 34-year extension to franchise

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
AND JASON NISSE

EUROTUNNEL yesterday struck agreement with the UK and French Governments to operate the Channel Tunnel until 2036. The move ends prolonged uncertainty over Eurotunnel's long-term prospects, but comes at a much higher price than the French Government had wanted.

The deal was reached after the company agreed to accept £62 million to settle a long-running dispute

with Transmanche Link, the consortium of contractors that built the tunnel and supplied the rolling stock. To continue running the tunnel from 2032 Eurotunnel will pay the two Governments 59 per cent of its profits until 2036. France, which has many small shareholders in Eurotunnel, had wanted the company to give up just 25 per cent.

The profit share includes the corporation tax already charged by the two Governments, which Eurotunnel estimates would have

worked out at around 40 per cent. The agreement was announced after the stock market had closed. Eurotunnel shares ended 2p lower at 57p, matching an all-time low.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, said: "These have been tough negotiations, but I believe that we now have in place an excellent deal for Britain, France and Europe. I have been determined to ensure that, using the desire on the part of Eurotunnel and the French Government for a longer concession, we

improve the conditions for the movement of rail freight through the Tunnel and into Europe."

Freight has been a key issue in the negotiations and Eurotunnel has agreed to limit its charges for new users. But John Noulton, director of public affairs at Eurotunnel, said the company had made no concessions on the rates charged for freight passing through the tunnel, other than an agreement to work with hauliers to promote carrying more freight by rail. "This is why we have

agreed to a slightly higher profit share with the Government."

The French Government is to build an international freight freeway from the Channel Tunnel to Metz and Strasbourg and towards Italy and Spain. SNCF, the French railway operator, is also to work with Railfreight Distribution, the British operator, to develop its business. Eurotunnel has also made assurances to Railfreight Distribution about the long-term future of Channel Tunnel rail freight.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5020.2	(-148.1)
Yield	3.2%	(-0.1%)
FTSE All Share	5,000	(+5.0%)
Nikkei	15314.89	(-246.75)
New York	7688.85	(-177.65)
Dow Jones	3355.05	(-20.25)
S&P Composite	635.05	(-1.25)

US RATE

Federal Fund	5.14%	(5.14%)
Long Bond	102.95%	(102.95%)
Yield	5.88%	(5.88%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month interbank	7.7%	(7.7%)
Little long gilt future (Mar)	121%	(121%)

STERLING

New York	1.6885*	(1.6885)
London	1.6888	(1.6888)
S	2.9513	(2.9436)
DM	9.2888	(9.3554)
FF	2.2588	(2.2588)
Yen	215.19	(213.20)
E Index	104.8	(104.1)

\$1.5511 DOLLAR

London	1.7182*	(1.7182)
DM	6.9320	(6.9320)
FF	1.2277*	(1.2277)
Yen	120.00	(120.71)
E Index	108.0	(107.0)

Tokyo close Yen 128.85

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 16-day (Mar)	617.70	(617.70)
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COAL

London close	626.25	(626.25)
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* denotes midday trading price

TransTec directors raise stakes

A PAIR of directors at TransTec, the engineering company founded by Geoffrey Robinson, now Paymaster General, have raised their stakes in the group. The two purchases were made after a 19p fall in the shares to 67p on Thursday (Chris Ayres writes).

The company, whose shares were 19p earlier this year, has suffered partly from the controversy over Mr Robinson's financial affairs. The Paymaster General has been under fire over the purchase of £12.5 million worth of TransTec shares by an offshore trust of which he is a beneficiary.

Yesterday Bill Jeffrey, finance director, and Richard Rimington, deputy chairman, took advantage of the share price fall to lift their stakes. Mr Jeffrey bought shares worth £21,000 and Mr Rimington made a £7,700 purchase. The shares closed up 10p at 77p.

Barclay's application for casino refused

By RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

AIDAN BARCLAY, son of the multimillionaire businessman David Barclay, has had his application for a casino licence for London's Ritz Hotel turned down by magistrates.

Horseferry Magistrates yesterday rejected Mr Barclay's application on the grounds that he had failed to make a case that there was public demand for another top-class casino in the area. Under 1968 legislation magistrates have an editorial discretion they can use to grant a licence. They declined to exercise it in Mr Barclay's favour. An appeal against the decision to the Crown Court is now likely.

Mr Barclay's father and uncle own the Ritz Hotel but the present casino in the basement is operated by London Clubs International. The lease is about to run out and London Clubs is taking its

casino licence to a new central London venue. Mr Barclay's Ritz Hotel should have a casino licence as part of the tourist attractions of Central London. The company that made the application, Ritz Hotel Casinos, which is backed by Aidan Barclay's own funds, found it difficult to prove a demand for a casino in the Ritz because it was unable to advertise its application.

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FREE PORTABLE HANDS FREE KIT WORTH £45
FREE LEATHER CASE & CARABINER WORTH £10.00
FREE 12 MONTHS INSURANCE WORTH £12.47
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DIAL-A-PHONE



John Devaney is likely to remain in charge of Eastern

Guinness Mahon has hand in Basil Brush deal

By CHRIS AYRES

BASIL BRUSH, the mischievous fox whose "boom-boom" catchphrase entertained television viewers in the 1970s, is to return to the world of entertainment after a £1 million investment from Guinness Mahon, the venture capitalist.

The rights to the tweed-clad children's character were bought in July by Bill Haslam, an obsessive fan who runs Boom Boom Limited, of Southampton. Guinness Mahon has decided to back the venture, which has been formed to exploit intellectual property rights through television, publishing, cinema, merchandising and theatre production.

Mr Haslam spent more than a year negotiating with Ivan Owen and Peter Firmin, the creators of Basil Brush. It is not known how much was eventually paid for the rights, though Mr Haslam said yesterday: "It was the most expensive cuddly toy I've ever bought."

Guinness Mahon's investment follows its backing of Sooty, another popular, though less aggressive, children's character. The group was also one of the original investors in the Britt Allcroft Group, owner of the rights to Thomas the Tank Engine. Gordon Power, of Guinness Mahon, said: "We have a long history of successful investment in media comp-

anies and we are unusual among fund managers in that we understand and recognise the value of intellectual property rights. Basil Brush is a classic English character which we see as having huge growth potential in both the UK and international markets."

Derek Bonham, chairman of The Energy Group, welcomed the approval although he said: "until all regulatory obstacles were removed the company could make no more comment." Pacificorp said it was also pleased with the approval.

Commentary, page 25

Hambros sells bank for £300m

BY JASON NISSE

HAMBROS yesterday ended 158 years of tradition by selling its merchant banking operations to Société Générale, the French bank, for £300 million. Sir Chips, the Hong Kong investment group that bought a 3 per cent stake last year and pressed Hambros to break itself up, saluted the deal. Julian Mayo, of Regent, said: "They could have got better value a year ago when we first suggested a break-up. This has been a wasted year."

The deal leaves Hambros as a holding company with about £250 million of cash, majority stakes in two public companies — Hambro Countywide and Hambro Insurance Services — a 44 per cent stake in Hambro Guinness Flight, the fund manager, plus £130 million of investments.

Simon Leathers, who takes over as chief executive of Hambros as part of the deal, said it would review the best way of selling its stakes. "Clearly there would be a control premium if we sold the holdings to someone who would make a bid for either of the companies, but it may be that it is best merely to hand the shares out to shareholders," said Mr Leathers.

Hambros will also look at the best way of distributing the £300 million proceeds of the SocGen sale to shareholders next year without incurring too large a tax bill.

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Commentary, page 25

A WEEK IN THE CITY

Goodbye, Guinness Grand Metropolitan. Hello, Diageo, the merged food-and-drink group, which saw its shares begin trading this week. There was the usual clutch of festive payouts, while the re-engineering of the corporate UK landscape continued apace.

Asda ruled out a bid for Safeway,

while Philip Green, former chief executive of Amherst Day, bought Shoe Express from Sears, continuing the break-up of the once mighty Sears shoe empire.

Esso went on a disposals spree, selling its Gsta bingo chain to the management, then unloading 1,428 plots to a venture led by Hugh Compton and Roger Myers. The

city bought it from the Government just over two years ago. In the Square Mile, Hansgeorg Hoffman resigned as chairman of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson amid allegations of tax evasion, while JP Morgan was hit with a £350,000 fine for market manipulation. Two traders have been dismissed.

Not a good week for Danks Business Systems, the Anglo-American photocopier company, which saw its shares drop 60 per cent in one day on a warning of sales. An even worse week for Sir Peter Davis, chief executive of Prudential Corporation, which was lambasted by the Financial Services Authority over rule breaches and shabby conduct. Arthur Andersen and An-

dersen Consulting renewed efforts to go their separate ways.

British Airways dipped and soared its way through the week, losing to Sir Freddie Laker in an American court action involving landing slots at Gatwick, then winning clearance to fly to Denver — the last non-stop route available under the bilateral UK-US treaty. Virgin Atlantic wanted to fly to Las Vegas instead. BA denied bizarre reports that one of its planes landing at Marrakech generated the windstorm which sent Richard Branson's balloon whirling into the sky.

SBC Warburg Dillon Read emerged as the "friendly" party interested in bidding £500 million

JON ASHWORTH

for Christie's International, the fine art auctioneer. The bid would be made on behalf of a consortium of wealthy private individuals. Discussions are at an early stage.

Some tidy Christmas handouts all round. Terry Green, chief executive of Debenhams, soon to be demerged from Burton Group, was toasting a £3 million Christmas payout, while Richard Oster, former long-serving head of Cookson Group, was in line for much the same — three months after boardroom disagreements cost him his job.

Retailers will be praying some of it finds its way into their tills.

JON ASHWORTH

BAT hit as secret documents appear on Net

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

BAT shares fell 4 per cent yesterday after an innocent-looking posting on the Internet.

The leading US tobacco companies agreed an immunity deal with government lawyers earlier this year to protect them against prosecution over health problems resulting from smoking. It was like a "get out of jail free" card in a billion-dollar monopoly game. But secret documents published on the Internet by a Congressman this week could yet prevent the companies from passing go.

The "get out of jail" card was not entirely free.

The \$368.5 billion (£220 billion) they agreed to pay over 25 years is, however, deemed to be a cheap insurance policy, given the litigious nature of US consumers coupled with the growing hatred of smoking in America.

The settlement would bar future class action cases against the tobacco industry, immunise it from punitive damages in lawsuits alleging past misconduct, and cap legal payouts at \$5 billion a year.

The deal has yet to be approved by the US Congress — and that looks increasingly unlikely now. Congressmen made use of special subpoena powers to obtain and then publish 834 sensitive company documents. The

documents reach back to the 1950s and cover subjects the companies strived for decades to keep out of the limelight. Internal memo and lawyers' letters reveal the handling of research dealing with cancer and underage smoking.

While the documents failed to turn up a "smoking gun", they are likely to incite new public outrage. Congress, which is facing elections next year, may delay the deal indefinitely. Henry Waxman, a Democratic representative from California, said: "This makes it more difficult for Congress to vote for immunity. It shows industry attorneys implementing a strategy of false science in order to mislead the American people."

The documents show that as recently as 1990 the industry was seeking \$100,000 to study the "characteristics of children" and how they decide to smoke. Scientific information was commissioned on the understanding that it would be favourable to the industry. Sam Witt, an industry lawyer, is quoted as saying: "Maybe the approach ought to be advocacy first and science second."

The publishing of the 834 documents may only be the start for anti-tobacco campaigners. They are working to obtain millions of other papers. But the tobacco lobby is fighting back, planning a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign in the US early next year.

Tour firms welcome report by MMC

BY PAUL DURMAN

THE leading travel companies warmly welcomed the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report that broadly clears the industry of abusing market power to the disadvantage of consumers.

In a falling stock market, shares in Airtours, which owns the Going Places travel agents, rose 17.5p to £12.20. First Choice, the only major tour operator without a travel agency arm, rose 2p to 99p.

At one stage it was suggested that the MMC inquiry could lead to a break-up of vertically integrated groups such as Airtours. Thomson (which owns Lunn Poly) and Thomas Cook (owner of Sunworld). But although the MMC re-

port published yesterday identifies a number of abuses, it concludes: "We have not found there are sufficient grounds for condemning vertical integration as a whole." The MMC said it was, therefore, unjustified and inappropriate to consider drastic structural remedies.

Paul Brett, chairman of Thomson Travel Group, said: "The MMC felt that vertical integration was more likely than not to result in keener prices and wider choice."

Thomson yesterday paid 3.3 billion Swedish kroner (£260 million) to follow Airtours into the Scandinavian market by buying Fritidsresor. This Swedish company sold 1.3 million holidays this year.

Airtours and the other companies were generally dismissive of the Department of Trade and Industry's claim that holiday prices will fall because of the three changes it is demanding. It intends to prohibit linking the sale of travel insurance to holiday discounts, and to outlaw the "most favoured customer" agreements that tour operators impose on travel agents. It also wants travel agents to clearly identify their ownership relationship with tour companies within the same group.

Airtours said it did not expect the changes will materially affect its UK business. Tim Byrne, finance director of Airtours, said: "It has got to be one of the most competitive industries in the world. There can't be many industries where you can buy a better product 20 years later for a better price in real terms."

Commentary, page 25

New rules on credit transfers proposed

BY SUSAN EMMETT

BANKS transferring money across the European Union will be required to stick to a time frame or pay interest if proposals published in a Treasury consultation document yesterday are introduced.

The document sets out proposals for implementing an EC directive aiming to raise the standards of credit transfers of up to £30,000 between member states. The directive came into force in February and must be implemented no later than August 1999.

Cross-border transfers are becoming increasingly popular and Treasury proposals specify that unless transfers are credited within six working days or an agreed time scale, the bank responsible for sending the money will be charged interest. The bank will also be required to reimburse the customer making the transfer if the money fails to reach its destination.

Under the new proposals, all charges for the transfer will be paid by the person sending the money. The bank receiving the cash cannot deduct charges unless requested to do so. If double-charging does occur, the banks are required to reimburse the excess fees.

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said: "Banks in all countries need to work to the same standards to satisfy their customers. Implementation of this directive will help us to achieve this."



Roy Amos, left, and Roger Akers have seen profits squeezed by the strong pound

Manders agrees £100m bid

BY MARTIN BARROW

MANDERS, the UK printing inks and coatings company, has succumbed to a £100 million takeover bid by Flint Ink Corporation, of America.

Yesterday Flint announced an agreed 250p a share cash offer for Manders. This has already attracted acceptances from institutional investors who speak for about 34 per cent of the ordinary shares. Flint is also offering 100p cash for each preference share. The

ordinary offer represents a 65 per cent premium to Thursday's middle market price of 151.5p. Manders' directors have also accepted the offer in respect of their combined holding of 219,310 shares.

Roy Amos, Manders' chairman, said: "We have known Flint for many years and we are enthusiastic about the combination, which will create a group with an enhanced ability to compete effectively

on an international basis." Manders, from which Roger Akers retires as chief executive at the end of the month, has seen its share price fall steadily since 1994, when it reached a peak of 403p.

Profits have fallen sharply, affected by competition from bigger US and European rivals. Manders this year issued a warning that profits would be hit by a margin squeeze caused by the strong pound.

The ITC decided to grant the necessary licences after it received a letter from the European Commission suggesting that the conditions the ITC planned to impose on the venture were acceptable and compatible with EC law.

The two main conditions are that BDB's programme supply agreement with BSkyB should last for five years rather than the seven originally envisaged. Sport and movie channels from BSkyB, in which News International, owner of *The Times*, has a 40 per cent stake, are seen as important to the viability of digital terrestrial television in the UK. The second condition would prevent directors from BSkyB sitting on the board of BDB and vice versa. BDB has no problem with either condition and believes that its business plans have emerged intact from the regulatory process.

Yesterday the European Commission said the EU had not yet cleared BDB. Officials said that Karel van Miert, the competition commissioner, has asked for the analysis of the case to continue. Both the ITC and BDB believe that the main outstanding issues have been resolved and that only a formal final process is now needed.

DAWNAY, DAY & CO, the financial services group, has succeeded in a hearing at the High Court in its bid to prevent Cantor Fitzgerald, a competitor, from using the Dawnay Day name for its European bond broking business. Dawnay Day Securities was formed as a joint venture between the firm and three broker managers in 1992. The managers defeated to Cantor earlier this year. Guy Neagor, the chairman of Dawnay Day, said that if the ruling had allowed Cantor to use the name it would have caused "chaos" in the industry.

Eurotherm in £3.4m deal

EUROTHERM, the electronic equipment group based in Sussex, has acquired ASB, the German company, for DM10 million (£3.4 million). ASB designs and manufactures servo drives in the specialist market for high-performance, dynamic control of fast-response servo motors. Its operations and product range will be integrated within Eurotherm's drives division. Eurotherm said that ASB's sales in the 1997 year were about DM10 million. Shares in Eurotherm rose from 365p to 366.5p yesterday.

Cleveland placing

CLEVELAND TRUST, the industrial property group that specialises in regional ports, has received applications for 47 per cent of the shares available in its £9.1 million placing and open offer. The new Cleveland ordinary shares not subscribed for by qualifying shareholders under the open offer have been placed with institutional investors by UBS and Sathers. Shares in Cleveland Trust remained unchanged at 102p yesterday. Cleveland offered almost 8.9 million shares at 102p a share.

Boxmore to expand

BOXMORE INTERNATIONAL, the specialist packaging group, plans to invest £16 million in the expansion of its Belfast healthcare packaging operation, creating 60 jobs and securing the employment of the company's current 180 staff. The investment will be backed by an Industrial Development Board support package of £2.9 million in the development of a packaging manufacturing facility for the supply of printed packaging to the pharmaceutical and healthcare sector. The development will involve building a new factory.

Lloyd's names

A report (December 13) incorrectly stated that High Court proceedings in which 627 Lloyd's names were involved were bankruptcy proceedings. They were not, but involved the court considering claims against the names.

Rivals unite for study into BBC

BY RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

A NUMBER of media groups concerned about the increasing commercial activities of the BBC have decided to commission an independent study on the issue. The aim is to make representations to the Government on what the companies believe are market distortions being caused by the BBC.

The decision to launch a campaign has been made by representatives of the ITV Association, the Commercial Radio Companies Association, Enmap Consumer Magazines, National Magazines and BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster in which News International, owner of *The Times*, has a 40 per cent stake.

The groups decided that they shared a common view of the commercial activities of

the BBC and plan to make representations to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, which plans to start looking into the entire future of the audio visual industries in the UK after Christmas.

The problem is a complex one because successive governments have asked the BBC to expand its commercial interests as much as possible as a way of best exploiting assets created by licence-fee payments over the years. Politicians also want the BBC to supplement the licence fee and prevent it rising as much as it otherwise would.

A Revenue spokesman said compensation payments would focus on just "hundreds" of investors. However, Professor Peter Willoughby, the tax consultant who won his case against the Revenue, claimed 3,500 people were involved.

Revenue in row over repayments

THE Inland Revenue yesterday conceded that it will have to repay tax plus interest to holders of certain offshore insurance bonds after its defeat in the House of Lords in July (Gavin Lumsden writes).

However, it was immediately embroiled in a row as the tax expert who successfully challenged its attempt to tax non-UK residents investing in personal portfolios disputed the numbers involved.

A Revenue spokesman said compensation payments would focus on just "hundreds" of investors. However, Professor Peter Willoughby, the tax consultant who won his case against the Revenue, claimed 3,500 people were involved.

Broken Hill set for more disposals

BY GEORGE SIVELL

THE stream of disposals at Broken Hill, the Australian steel, mining and oil giant, looks set to continue after the company said sales of one tenth of its business, assets of A\$4 billion (£1.6 billion), were not out of the question.

The disposal news came as BHP reported a better than expected net profit of A\$795 million for the six months to November 30, including A\$99 million in one-off gains. The figure was almost the same a year ago, but was well ahead of recent forecasts.

BHP's core minerals and petroleum assets again stood out, especially Australian and Irish Sea oil and gas fields. And Australian coal and iron ore. John Preston, managing director, said BHP would

build its future around these assets and was ready to sell non-core and poorly performing businesses.

BHP has total assets of about A\$37 billion. Mr Preston said: "Anything that does not give us the performance that shareholders expect will be reviewed and will be put up for sale." On brokers' predictions that BHP would sell a further A\$4 billion of assets, he said: "The magnitude is not out of court." About A\$3 billion of assets have gone from the balance sheet in the past 18 months.

BHP shares ended the day down 14 cents at A\$13.66. They have fallen in six months from A\$20 because of weak profits, high costs, and low commodity prices.

Results add to share price gloom for investors after profit warning from Reebok

Nike decline sees training shoes down at heel

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

NEW YORK'S Times Square is usually filled with Broadway theatre goers but in December the throngs of tourists are crowding around a small shop between two glitzy cinemas. The Foot Locker, arguably the sports retailer with the world's best sales spot, is more crowded than Wimbledon on a sunny day in July. Shoppers are being turned away at the door.

Sports brands including Nike and Adidas are having one of the best Christmas shopping seasons on record but analysts do not expect the companies to have a soft landing after Boxing Day. The industry is beset by sales worries that yesterday led to

sharp share price declines in Europe and America. The manufacturers' worries are also likely to affect the performance of retail chains.

The self-off of sports brands started with a Wall Street announcement early yesterday morning that Nike profits had fallen 20 per cent. Before the New York Stock Exchange had digested the news, Adidas shares in Germany fell 3 per cent. Bernd Janssen, of UBS in Frankfurt, said: "The Nike results are

not even Nike's announcement that it will buy back \$1 billion, or 7.7 per cent, of its shares could buoy the market. Net income at the world's biggest trainer maker fell from \$176 million to \$141 million in the fourth quarter. Instead of a 20 per cent drop, analysts had expected a 10 per cent increase. Profit forecasts had been lowered from 15 per cent after a profit warning in September.

Nike shares followed in hot pursuit, opening 10 per cent lower a few hours later. The share price dropped below \$40, lower than at any point this year.

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continuing to negatively impact gross margins." Reebok, Nike's main US competitor, gave a profit warning last week that sent shares down 13 per cent. But Adidas may yet escape the worst of the industry slump despite yesterday's share price plunge. Mr Janssen said: "Adidas is still experiencing strong growth in US orders. The drop is overcome because this is an industry problem."

Nike shares have declined 30 per cent this year on worries about the US market. The manufacturer now acknowledges that fewer teenagers regard trainers as fashion items and are increasingly turning to hiking boots made by companies such as Timberland.

Business round-up

Losses deepen at discount retailer

WEW, the discount retailer, suffered a loss before tax of £8.5 million in the year to August 2, a deterioration on the £3 million loss in the previous year. Sales fell to £90.4 million, from £116 million. Once again there is no dividend for the year. John Visser, the WEW chairman, said that the group had "a turbulent period over the last 12 months", but added that the new management team was taking steps to turn round the group's trading position and the board was "facing the future with confidence". WEW is now fully owned by Brown & Jackson whose shares fell 2p to 33p yesterday.

Mr Visser said the disappointing results reflected a particularly difficult spring/summer season in which the group embarked on an aggressive discount policy that had a downward effect on margins, and did not generate the additional sales volumes expected. The directors had since carried out a fundamental review of the pricing structure, which led to "a significant reduction in the prices of key lines for the forthcoming year". A fundamental review of the group's store portfolio led to a number of stores being identified as not compatible with business requirements and a provision of £3.7 million has been made in this year's accounts to cover the expected closure costs of these stores.

Airlines join forces

ALITALIA is to join the partnership between KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Northwest Airlines Corp of the United States as part of the broader strategic alliance between the Italian and Dutch carriers. Alitalia and KLM said in a joint statement that their own partnership would become operational in November next year, when the enlarged airport at Malpensa in Italy is due to be opened. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines has stated that the forging of an alliance with an Asian airline will be one of its main priorities next year.

Casinos acquisition

HARRAH'S Entertainment is to acquire Showboat in a deal valued at \$1.2 billion (£710 million) in cash and long-term debt. Harrah's has agreed to pay \$519 million, or \$30.75 a share, in cash, and assume \$635 million of the company's debt. The deal creates the world's largest gaming company, with casino revenues estimated at about \$2.5 billion, according to Harrah's. Showboat owns and operates casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Harrah's operates casinos in Las Vegas, Reno, Lake Tahoe, Laughlin and Atlantic City.

Great Portland buys

GREAT PORTLAND ESTATES, the property company, yesterday announced acquisitions worth a total of £75 million. The company is acquiring the private company that owns the Queens Arcade Shopping Centre in Cardiff for a nominal sum plus £54 million of debts. In addition Great Portland is to pay £20.4 million for a 312,500 sq ft warehouse development, nearing completion, at Severnside Distribution Park, Bristol. The finished building is to be let for 25 years to Matthew Clark at a rent of £1.55 million a year.

Dawnay, Day court win

DAWNAY, DAY & CO, the financial services group, has succeeded in a hearing at the High Court in its bid to prevent Cantor Fitzgerald, a competitor, from using the Dawnay Day name for its European bond broking business. Dawnay Day Securities was formed as a joint venture between the firm and three broker managers in 1992. The managers defeated to Cantor earlier this year. Guy Neagor, the chairman of Dawnay Day, said that if the ruling had allowed Cantor to use the name it would have caused "chaos" in the industry.

Euro

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's verdict on the latest foreign take-over in UK electricity was as inevitable as it is regrettable. Britain may be helping to create a monster by allowing Pacifico's bid for The Energy Group.

The former Hanson division already married one of the industry's oddest couples: formerly Eastern Electricity and America's Peabody Coal. The ambitious combined group is claimed to be the world's biggest private coalmine and coal generator. That worries environmentalists — and others.

The merger could favour a better deal for coal in the UK. After acquiring power stations from National Power and Powergen, Eastern labours at the fence where coal meets gas. It could be open for remunerative deals.

Maybe not. Eastern is a key player in the electricity pool. Its bids determine prices about a third of the time. And, to the chagrin of big energy users, average pool and contract prices have been going up most of the time since the divestment to Eastern. Yet cost trends should have pushed prices down.

A foreign-owned company, which needs to maximise short-term cash-flow to service its parent's slush of debt, is surely more likely to opt for a penny-pinching cost strategy and a price strategy that maximises short-term returns in the pool. Nor is a group used to operating

under legalistic American utility rules likely to be a soft touch if the regulator tries to reform the pool without legislation.

Still less may Pacifico play ball in backstairs political deals. That is fine under an energy policy based on promoting competition in production and supply, with regulation of the monopolies in between. Should the Government wish to change this, for instance to save a bit more of UK coal after next June, it would need to resort to French-style dealmaking.

Imagine what would happen if ministers wanted to nudge the industry in the direction of energy-saving. If one big player was not prepared to play, the others could not afford to.

What this amounts to, however, is that we do not want foreigners becoming any more powerful in such a basic regulated industry. The French are proud of such sentiments. In Britain they are not politically correct. No competition issue arose, so Margaret Beckett had to make her mark by referring the agreed deal on regulatory fears. But rules to ring-fence utility operations were tightened after Hanson bought Eastern. So the MMC could hardly demur.

Remember that the MMC was happy for PowerGen and National Power to take over regional electricity companies, but imposed enough conditions to allow a Tory minister to veto the deals. PowerGen will now be pushing to be allowed Eastern-style vertical integration. If TEG's management were independent minded, it would now play Pacifico off against PowerGen and others to garner a better bid. The City is not betting on it.

Change as good as rest for travel firms

David Crossland, the founder and power behind Airtours, put it pretty succinctly yesterday. How many industries are actually offering better products more cheaply than they were 20 years ago? Telecommunications and computers spring to mind. But they have been spurred by

technological advances. The aircraft that fly from East Midlands Airport to Alicante are not significantly different from the ones that flew in 1974. The hotels are not all that much better, and the beaches less sandy. Yet two weeks in June, which cost £400 a head then, cost £350 now. This seems all the more perverse given that industry is dominated by three main operators who would be expected to collude on prices, but clearly do not.

The fact that the MMC decided that there should be no major shake-up in the travel industry should not come as a surprise. After all — as they say in the States — if it ain't broke, don't fix it, though the MMC had a good go at trying to fix the electrical retailing business where only Dixons appears to be making money. Indeed, for the conclusions that were actually reached, it seems like a waste of the competition experts' time.

Still you could not have all

those fine brains working for many months without one or two recommendations. One is sensible, the other a bit of a joke. Both refer to transparency, something that has often been lacking in an industry where even the small print on the brochure often does not make it clear who is taking you away on holiday.

The sensible recommendation is about insurance. Tour operators should make clearer the link between the cheap deals on offer and the insurance they sell, as most people have no idea of the cost of two weeks' travel insurance for South America. This should also be extended to mortgages, where so many cheap offers come with a requirement to take household insurance at inflated prices.

The other is on signage. The MMC says that it should be made clear that, for example, the Going Places travel agents are owned by Airtours or Luton Poly by Thomson Travel. Once you

enter the shops it is clear they are offering a single operator's products, not a full range.

However if the MMC does have its way there will be the amusing sight of Thomas Cook shops having to say they are part of the WestDeutsche Landesbank group. Will that help to make the consumers any better informed?

The price of tradition

If you look at it one way, Hambros Bank is worth more than BZW and NatWest Markets combined. Of course these are not comparable businesses. Hambros has a substantial private banking operation which — despite the bad corporate finance because of its involvement in Andrew Regan's abortive bid for Co-operative Wholesale — remains a strong franchise, particularly in the Channel Islands. It also can continue operating on a sensible scale without heavy investment. But who would believe that Hambros could have sold its "value impaired" merchant bank for a premium to its net asset

value, particularly in the current market. The price Hambros obtained is on a par with the amount Swiss Bank Corporation spent on SG Warburg and makes the price Kleinwort Benson shareholders persuaded Dresdner Bank to cough up — which was nearly twice net assets — look particularly good.

The break up of the rest, predicted here yesterday, will return as much as £700 million to shareholders. This is made up of the £300 million SocGen is paying, the Hambro Countrywide and Insurance Services stakes, worth £230 million, the £130 million investment portfolio, the 44 per cent of Guinness Flight Hambro, which could easily command £50 million in a sale, and £44 million of liabilities. Even allowing for how much the tax man grabs, the £460 million valuation the market gives to Hambros looks bushy.

Chunnel vision

AT the last time of looking, hell had not frozen over. Yet the dispute between TMI, the builders of the Channel Tunnel, and Eurotunnel has been settled. A deal has also been struck to extend Eurotunnel's operating licence by 34 years. The group is sound financially, the merger of P&O and Stena has avoided a price war next summer and the fast link from Folkestone may actually be built on time. Something has to go wrong soon.

Chemical groups revamp sector in £175m deals

By CARL MORTISHED

THE restructuring of Europe's chemicals industry gathered pace yesterday with a flurry of deals totalling £175 million as players sought to consolidate their position in their chosen markets.

BTP, the chemicals group, has sold Mydrin, its adhesive and ipides coatings division, to Bostik, a UK subsidiary of Total, the French oil and chemicals group, for £26 million. Simultaneously, Total is selling on Mydrin's German operations to National Starch and Chemical, an ICI subsidiary, for £22 million. In turn, ICI is selling a chemical intermediates business to Air Products for £67 million.

Mydrin makes solvent-based glues used in packaging, construction, footwear and electronics. It is also a leading producer of fire-retardant coatings for textiles.

The deal completes a year of rapid change for BTP. The chemicals group has spent almost £80 million buying new businesses including leather and specialty chemicals operations from Yorkshire Group and PCR, an American fine chemicals business. Steve Hannam, BTP's chief executive, said: "This is a very significant step in our strategy of refocusing BTP on higher added value speciality and fine chemicals."

Mydrin, which has operations in the UK, Germany, France, Italy and the US, made profits of £6.4 million in the year to March from operating assets worth £43.5 million.

The disposal will give a £42 million boost to net assets but no exceptional profit or loss.



Big change: Charles Miller Smith, ICI's chief executive

The proceeds will enable BTP to reduce net debt to £10 million, leaving the group with gearing of just 6 per cent. Mr Hannam said: "The additional cash resources and borrowing capacity available to us as a result of this sale will enable us to invest in fine chemicals growth and seek further acquisitions."

ICI said that its subsidiary National Starch would gain sales of £27 million with the purchase of Mydrin's German adhesives business, strength-

ening its position in the wood-working and paper-converting sectors in Germany.

At ICI, where Charles Miller Smith is chief executive, has sold its methacrylates and derivatives business to Air Products for £67 million. The business has an estimated annual turnover of £53 million. Air Products will take on 125 employees from ICI's Teesside operations plus a plant site and product lines.

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Investment trust sector suffers loss of £2.7bn of funds

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

THE amount of money that has left the investment trust sector in the past year leapt to £2.7 billion yesterday as US arbitrageurs succeeded in making deals.

The £356 million Kleinwort Benson Investment Trust (KOIT) announced it would turn itself into a unit trust after shareholders, led by Sierra Trading and supported by Standard Life, rejected reconstruction proposals from the trust's board that would have enabled them to cash in 60 per cent of their stake.

This is the second trust Kleinwort Benson has lost recently. Last year the £500 million Kleinwort Benson European Privatisation Trust was unitised after a furious bidding war between fund managers.

Meanwhile, shareholders in the Overseas Investment Trust, a £190 million fund managed by Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, voted against continuing the company. The trust has performed poorly recently and like KOIT has seen its shares fall to wide discount to its net asset value. Morgan Grenfell's humiliation was deepened when shareholder rebels, led by the Liverpool Limited Partnership and the Westgate International Limited Partnership, two US arbitrageurs, rejected the re-election of one of their directors, James Fox, to the trust's board. The trust is now likely to be turned into a unit trust, enabling investors to take cash or continue their investment.

Arbitrageurs make money by buying large stakes in undervalued trusts and then forcing the boards to take action to improve returns for shareholders, usually in the form of early termination. US companies with no ties to the UK investment world, are frequent players in the action. Unlike UK institutional investors they are prepared to make enemies of the big City firms that manage investment trusts. They are now likely to turn their attention to other international investment trusts, such as Duncun Worldwide and Anglo Overseas, which is also managed by DMG.

Although the shares of most investment trusts suffer wide discounts, international trusts are particularly vulnerable because they are no longer in demand by institutional investors.

Mr Pennycook joined Wetherspoon as finance director two years ago, having previously worked for Alders. His retailing experience is intended to complement the turnaround skills of David Hoare, who last month replaced Ann Iverson as Laura Ashley's chief executive.

Mr Hoare has been using Olivier Roux, best-known as finance director of Guinness in the Ernest Saunders era, and Richard Grogan to advise on dealing with Laura Ashley's problems in the US.

Lonrho bid fears surface after resignation at JCI

By JASON NIES

LONRHO'S attempts to agree a £450 million deal to take over JCI, the South African mining group, were thrown into doubt yesterday after Mzi Khumalo resigned as JCI's executive chairman.

Mr Khumalo, a former freedom fighter and prisoner on Robben Island, has been a strong proponent of the deal to merge with Lonrho and had been promised a seat on the conglomerate's board if Lonrho's bid was successful.

After a stormy board meeting in Johannesburg yesterday morning, Mr Khumalo said he was stepping down as executive chairman of JCI, though he will continue in a non-executive role. His resignation was prompted by a row over JCI's potential 250 million rand (£31 million) investment in 20 per cent of Southern Mining, a heavy

metal exploration company. Other directors had accused Mr Khumalo of forcing through the acquisition without a full board meeting. The deal, which would have given Mr Khumalo a personal profit of 35 million rand, has now been reversed.

The row also brought to the surface tensions between Mr

Khumalo and Brett Kebble, the JCI director in charge of its gold mining operations. JCI has agreed to sell Mr Kebble some of its gold assets and swap the rest with Anglo American, the South African conglomerate which owns 26 per cent of Lonrho's shares.

The European Community recently approved the transfer of the Lonrho stake from Anglo to JCI. However, it will be subject to approval by shareholders and there is speculation that other JCI shareholders — led by Investec, the investment bank — might block the Anglo deal.

If the JCI deal fails through,

it will put a spanner in the works of the restructuring of Lonrho being masterminded by Sir John Craven, its chairman.

This received a boost this week when Lonrho sold its Dutton-Forsyth motor dealerships chain to a management team for £113 million.

Spanish to buy UDO for £46m

GRUPO PICKING PACK. the Spanish stationer, has agreed to pay £46 million in a 200p-a-share cash bid for UDO, the office supplies and reprographics group. Shares in UDO rose 24p to 189p in response.

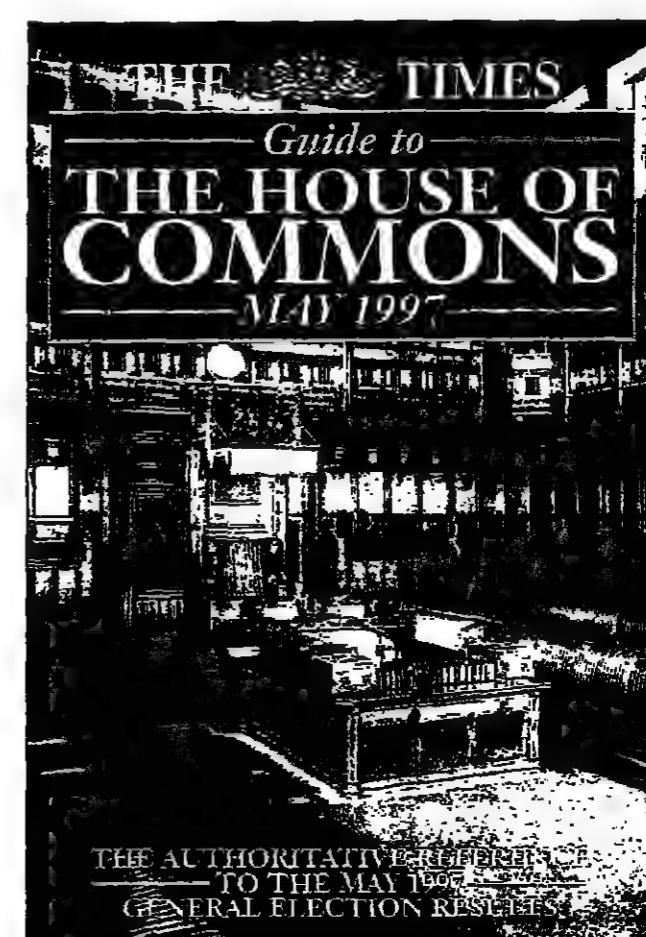
GPP has a chain of franchised and other stores selling stationery and retail reprographic services. It also has a warehousing division and a logistics division. GPP has recently started the development of a network of megastores.

Carlo U. Bonomi, president of GPP, said: "The acquisition of UDO represents the first step towards GPP becoming a pan-European provider of reprographic services and office supplies."

UDO made £6.2 million before tax in the year to July 31 on sales of £83.3 million and had net assets at the end of July of £28.1 million.

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Laura Ashley agrees loan

By PAUL DURMAN

LAURA ASHLEY, the troubled fashion retailer that had been in breach of its loan agreements, has placed its finances on a firmer footing by agreeing a new £70 million borrowing facility with its banks (See Commentary, this page).

The company has also appointed Richard Pennycook, 33, finance director of JD Wetherspoon, to replace James Walsh as its finance director.

Laura Ashley fell foul of its banking covenants when it became clear that it would this year make a loss estimated at

£15 million. Technically, this would have allowed its six banks to call in their loans.

In return, for fees from Laura Ashley, the banks have agreed to provide a £70 million committed facility until April 1999. The syndicate consists of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Tokyo Mitsubishi, Dai-Ichi Kangyo, Midland Bank, Sakura Bank and Standard Chartered. The company recently told analysts that it had debts of about £40 million, but this is likely to have fallen in the run-up to Christmas.

Mr Carr and his family have sold their entire shareholdings, amounting to 608,596 shares, to Mr Dale for almost £200,000, or 41.07p a share.

Creightons said that Mr Dale will concentrate on finding a substantial acquisition for the group. Mr Dale is currently a non-executive director of Greenalls and Triplex Lloyd, which this week accepted a bid from Doncasters, the engineering group.

Creightons said: "Mr Dale will concentrate on finding a substantial acquisition for the company, which will propel Creightons to the next stage of its development."

Fresh air for Dale at Creightons

By GEORGE STIVELL

BARRY DALE, the deposed chief executive of Littlewoods, has emerged at the helm of Creightons, the troubled toiletries and fragrances group. Shares of Creightons, which have fallen sharply over the past two years, bounced from 20p to 35½p yesterday after it was announced that Mr Dale had been appointed executive chairman.

He succeeds John Carr, the executive responsible for the rescue and restructuring of Creightons, who has resigned.

The company said he has been paid £240,000 in connection with the early termination of his consultancy contract.

Creightons said: "Mr Dale will concentrate on finding a substantial acquisition for the company, which will propel Creightons to the next stage of its development."

All change at Lloyd's as the old guard bows out

Adam Jones
assesses the challenges facing the market's new chairman

The peaceful handover of power that is to take place in the boardroom of Lloyd's of London at the end of this month should be the gesture that triumphantly draws a line under the society's former troubles.

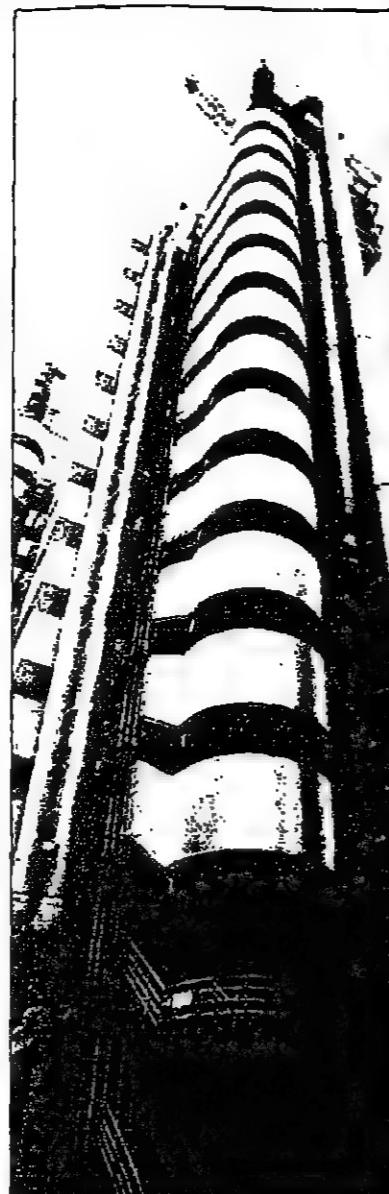
The urbane and unflappable Sir David Rowland will pass the chairmanship to Max Taylor, an executive director of Willis Corroon, the insurance broker, knowing that under his stewardship, and with the aid of behind-the-scenes heavyweights such as Charles Roxburgh, of McKinsey, the management consultants, and Barry O'Brien, of Freshfields, the solicitors, the insurance market was steered through the painful reconstruction made necessary by more than £2 billion of losses.

Yet the success of the Lloyd's rescue, and the need to modernise the market to keep pace with international competition, has created new tensions, rifts that are likely to deepen in the coming year as Sir David begins his new job as President of Templeton College at Oxford University.

The society's newest members, the companies and investment vehicles brought in as a fresh source of capital in 1994, believe that the change of chairman should be mirrored by a change in the pecking order of investors.

These providers of "corporate capital" have started from nothing to become, in 1998, the largest providers of money to underwriting syndicates displacing the wealthy individuals who have traditionally backed the market. Corporates are now providing 60 per cent of the backing, up from 44 per cent in 1997.

The composition of the ruling council body is yet to mirror this change and it is a



Lloyd's was steered through its reconstruction by Sir David Rowland, top. Broker Max Taylor will succeed him



source of discontent. The corporate investors also want the abolition of the annual joint venture, where investors commit themselves to underwriting one year at a time rather than continuously, a process the corporates regard as an expensive liability in spite of the opposing claim that it is a uniquely claimable system, allowing the market to easily expand or contract in good and bad times.

Sir David has been diplomatic on this dispute, although his decision to switch from traditional, unlimited-liability underwriting to limit-

ed liability was a nod in the direction of change.

A popular attitude in the corridors of Lime Street is to let market forces do their job without any central interference. If the market shifts to "continuous capital", making it in effect a coalition of small insurance companies, then so be it.

The calls for restructuring from corporate capital may be muted by upheavals in their own backyard, however. The quoted funds that act as a channel for investors wanting Lloyd's exposure are coming under tremendous pressure,

mainly from pessimistic stock market valuations. They are being pushed to consolidate, buy the underwriting agencies they supply with capital and then do the bulk of their underwriting in-house. Essentially, they are trying to become insurance companies, giving investors a recognisable management story to focus on, rather than being the Lloyd's equivalent of a faceless fund manager.

Mr Taylor will be very keen not to get bogged down in internal politics. His team, which includes Ron Sandler, the chief executive, is racing to

get away from Lloyd's historic obsession with its capital base. The mantra of "customer focus" is repeated frequently.

One of the most significant advances on this front in 1997 was the award of a credit rating for the first time, a big selling point overseas. Mr Taylor's appointment, which angered some members who wanted a better-known external candidate, has been justified in this context. Lloyd's, aware of competition from Bermuda and elsewhere, needs someone to go out and sell it to potential customers, who better to do that than a broker?

It is a valid argument, and Mr Taylor is widely held to be a charismatic man, although it is often forgotten that Sir David had a broking background too, first with Matthew Wrightson, laterly as chairman of Sedgwick.

Amid all the excitement of change, it is vital to bear in mind that underwriting in 1998 is likely to remain difficult. Syndicate Underwriting Research Ltd (SURL) believes that a miserly 2.9 per cent profit is achievable for the market next year.

Mark Hewlett, managing director of SURL, said: "The recent benign loss experience has led to appalling competition, woefully reduced rates and increasingly liberal policy terms and conditions. Although we predict a profit for the market for 1998, the reality is that our syndicate forecasts show a lot of red ink."

Man from the Pru must rethink his policy to turn tide

Sir Peter Davis has had probably the worst week of his high-profile business career. His company, the largest life insurer in the land, was on Tuesday the target of the most critical attack ever launched by a financial watchdog. Instead of looking forward to his 50th birthday next Tuesday, the Prudential Corporation's chief executive has been left pondering headlines such as "Prudential: a company out of control".

Sir Peter's early birthday present from Howard Davies at the newly formed Financial Services Authority (FSA) was a savage report, calling into question the whole management ethos of the Prudential. It spoke of a "deep-seated and longstanding failure in management" and a "cultural predisposition against compliance, filtered through Prudential Assurance's branch offices, their managers and advisers".

A few weeks earlier Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, singled out the Pru for its slowness in paying compensation to victims of pensions mis-selling.

Yet Sir Peter believes he may be able to see out the storm. A persuasive and arrogant man, who uses his height and weight to dominate those who meet him, he has been putting out the message that the problems were the fault of Jim Sutcliffe, who left as head of the Pru in the UK in September after 19 years with the company; or Mick Newmarch, Sir Peter's predecessor and another career man from the Pru who left under a cloud three years ago.

Sir Peter's version of events has him struggling to get to grips with a culture which had a contempt for compliance — right down to Newmarch's insistence that the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) was not up to regulating the Pru and it would only answer to the Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the predecessor of the FSA.

When Sir Peter took over from Newmarch in May 1995 he thought he could guide the Pru to stability. He saw his role akin to how he ran Reed International, the publisher, where he guided strategy and did deals without actually having to get his hands dirty running businesses. Sir Peter left the day-to-day running of the £120 billion organisation to those who knew about running financial services businesses.

He freely admits he has no experience in the pensions industry. His career started with ten years at J Sainsbury, where he was in charge of marketing. He then joined Reed International, guiding a massive shake-up which saw the disposal of the printing arm and the *Daily Mirror* and the purchases of Octopus books and the Lexis-Nexis electronic publishing business. Ultimately he masterminded the merger of Reed with Elsevier of The Netherlands. Less than two years after the merger, Sir Peter fell out with the Dutch and resigned, picking up a £1.5 million payoff.

Pru's business. He was knighted under the last Government, yet was close enough to Labour to be appointed to head the Government's Welfare to Work scheme. Taking his customary high profile he personally became the guardian angel of the country's savings in the Pru's TV advertising campaign.

Meanwhile, Sir Peter had revealed the sharpness of his deal-making skills by defeating Abbey National in the bid for Scottish Amicable. The deal gave Prudential increased distribution through independent financial advisers, where ScotAm has a strong brand. The City believes that Pruden-



Sir Peter Davis is facing perhaps his toughest test yet

tial paid a good price for the mutual company, where value is notoriously difficult to measure. Sir Peter also became involved in talks about a merger with NatWest. The talk floundered, apparently on the division of roles in the new group, but then leaked out into the market, putting pressure on NatWest to return to the negotiating table.

However, while Sir Peter was involved with the cut and thrust of takeovers, the regulator was having a close look at the corporate culture that had allowed unsupervised salesmen to sell unsuitable pensions to thousands, including many nurses and miners.

It found that the Pru was still drenched in a culture of non-compliance. It discovered that the company had mis-sold policies other than pensions, that it was more interested in saving money than following compliance procedures. In one particularly damning paragraph, the FSA said the Pru's conduct had fallen substantially below the standards that the public had a right to expect from a regulated firm.

Sir Peter is now facing a dangerous few months. He has taken comfort that the City has shrugged off the Pru's regulatory problems — marking the shares up 50 per cent in the year — and now needs to persuade the regulators and the Government that the Pru is en route to mending its ways. Much of the future growth in financial services companies will be determined by the Government's plans for the welfare state, especially pensions. The Government has made it clear that those companies that are seen to fall below certain regulatory standards will simply not be able to offer the products that will be inevitably introduced to replace the welfare state.

Sir Peter needs all his resources of charm, all his friends in the City and all his skills as a deal-maker to keep the Pru in pole position in the British financial services market. Yet the trait that Sir Peter will most need to show is his resource of resilience, illustrated by his ability to return to centre stage after his departure from Reed. The man from the Pru must now prove he is made of Teflon.

CAROLINE MERRELL

IN THE HOT SEAT

CV. SIR PETER DAVIS

Born 1941.
1976: J Sainsbury.
1986 to 1994: Chief executive, then chairman of Reed International.
1991: Non-executive director of Boots.
1995: The Prudential.
1997: Chairman Business in the Community and Welfare to Work scheme.

THE MARKET IS DOWN, THE NAME SEEMED TO SAY. HOWEVER, THE FIVE-YEAR BULL MARKET HAS RATHER GONE AGAINST THIS CONCEPT — INDEED THE CONTRA-CYCICAL NAME IMPLIED "WE WILL LOSE MONEY FOR YOU WHILE EVERYONE ELSE IS LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK". SO THE FUND HAS BEEN RENAMED FIRSBURY INCOME AND GROWTH INVESTMENT TRUST. BUT AS AN INVESTMENT EXPERT WILL EXPLAIN — YOU EITHER INVEST FOR GROWTH OR INCOME. HIGH-YIELDING COMPANIES ARE OFTEN THE ONES WITH THE SLOWEST GROWTH. SO THE NEW NAME MAKES ABSOLUTELY NO SENSE AT ALL.

Bitter brew

IT IS A sad indictment of modern society that Anheuser-Busch, the giant American brewer, has persuaded a Danish court, of all things, that it has the rights to the brand name Budweiser — not Budejovicky Budvar, the Czech brewers. After all, the Czechs invented Budweiser, being the German name for the original Czech brewery. Anheuser-Busch views this victory as evening the scores after Budejovicky Budvar won a case against it in Switzerland.

Meanwhile, other Czech brewers have successfully gained injunctions against Holsten and — of all people — Marks & Spencer for using the Pils brand name. For the record, beer in the Czech Republic sells for as little as 15p a pint and is lovely.

JASON NISSE

EXCLUSIVE TIMES TRAVEL OFFER

Ski France — Les Arcs

Seven nights from only £599



Plus FREE 6-day ski lift pass and ski/boot hire

Leisure Direction in association with Ski France International is offering *Times* readers an exclusive selection of ski holidays to celebrate the launch of the new direct high-speed rail links to the Alps.

Travel from Waterloo or Ashford on Eurostar non-stop to the French Alps and stay in the superb resort of Les Arcs. Renowned for great door-to-door skiing, a lively atmosphere and superb facilities, Les Arcs is set in a massive ski area with 150km of piste, including the Varet Glacier. Ideal for all levels of skiing, with 13 green beginners slopes, 44 easy blue runs, 37 intermediate red runs, and 18 testing black runs, including the 16km Aiguille Rouge, moguls and superb off-piste for advanced skiers. Village level 1800m; highest point 3226m.

MAEVA LATITUDES HOTEL DU GOLF
The three-star Hotel du Golf, based in Arc 1800 is approximately 30 minutes from the Eurostar station and centrally located within the resort at the foot of the pistes. Facilities include four restaurants, a bar, sauna and fitness room. All rooms have private shower or bath, television, minibar and hair dryers.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR SPECIAL
There is no better way to spend Christmas or New Year than holidaying in the Alps. Readers who choose to book these dates will have a special Christmas meal and New Year's celebration arranged by the Hotel du Golf, included in the price on the relevant dates.

DATES AND PRICES PER ADULT		
DEPARTURE DATE	NIGHTS	PRICE
DECEMBER 20	7	£649
DECEMBER 20	14	£999
DECEMBER 27	7	£699
JANUARY 10	7	£599
FEBRUARY 21	7	£699

All dates are Saturday daytime departures.

Children under the age of three years travel free. Discount of 50-80% available for up to two children from the ages of four to eleven years. The resort offers excellent kindergarten and childrens clubs.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return standard class Eurostar
- Seven nights half-board accommodation
- Transfers between station and hotel
- FREE 6-day lift-pass
- FREE 6-day ski and boot rental

ABTA VATA. This offer is operated by Leisure Direction Limited, a company independent of Times Newspapers Limited.

FOR FULL BOOKING DETAILS CALL LEISURE DIRECTION ON 0181-324 4003
(Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm)
OR SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO: THE TIMES SKI OFFER,
LEISURE DIRECTION LIMITED, IMAGE HOUSE, STATION ROAD, LONDON N17 5LR.

Isa U-turn?

SO FAREWELL the Individual Savings Account. I have it on good authority that Gordon Brown and his much-maligned sidekick, Geoffrey Robinson, are ready for another possible U-turn on the tax-free product. First it was the £50,000 limit on investments. Now it is the name.

As we have pointed out on these pages, Isa has a number of interesting meanings — mostly approximating to God. Now that this has been brought to Brown's attention, he has decreed that the Isa name may have to go. There are, after all, enough people in the Treasury who think they are God.

Winning ad

READERS will remember the award-winning Silk Cut advertisement, featured on these pages on Monday, that accompanied a profile of BAT Industries. But as crowds of smokers have been rushing to tell me, BAT might sell Silk Cut worldwide, but in the UK, Ireland and the European Free Trade Area the cigarettes are sold by Gallaher. So the award-winning ad is a Gallaher ad.

Right pitch

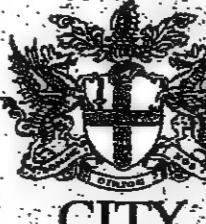
ONE-hundred-and-fifty-eight years of tradition may have been ended with the sale of



Keswick consultancy role

THE TIMES

CITY DIARY



CITY DIARY

while the market is down, the name seemed to say. However, the five-year bull market has rather gone against this concept — indeed the Contra-Cyclical name implied "we will lose money for you while everyone else is laughing all the way to the bank". So the fund has been renamed Firsbury Income and Growth Investment Trust. But as an investment expert will explain — you either invest for growth or income. High-yielding companies are often the ones with the slowest growth. So the new name makes absolutely no sense at all.

Bitter brew

IT IS A sad indictment of modern society that Anheuser-Busch, the giant American brewer, has persuaded a Danish court, of all things, that it has the rights to the brand name Budweiser — not Budejovicky Budvar, the Czech brewers. After all, the Czechs invented Budweiser, being the German name for the original Czech brewery. Anheuser-Busch views this victory as evening the scores after Budejovicky Budvar won a case against it in Switzerland.

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جامعة لندن

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK
Stock Market Writer of the Year

Caution of retailers hits prices in stores sector

THE traditional run-up to Christmas appears to have been a distressing time for many retailers. The usual jangling of tills has been muffled by the five interest rate rises implemented by Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, since May, forcing consumers to concentrate any spare cash on keeping the mortgage paid.

This week's stronger than expected increase in the official retail sales contradicted dull figures from the British Retail Consortium showing sales growth in the high street slowing to its lowest level since April last year.

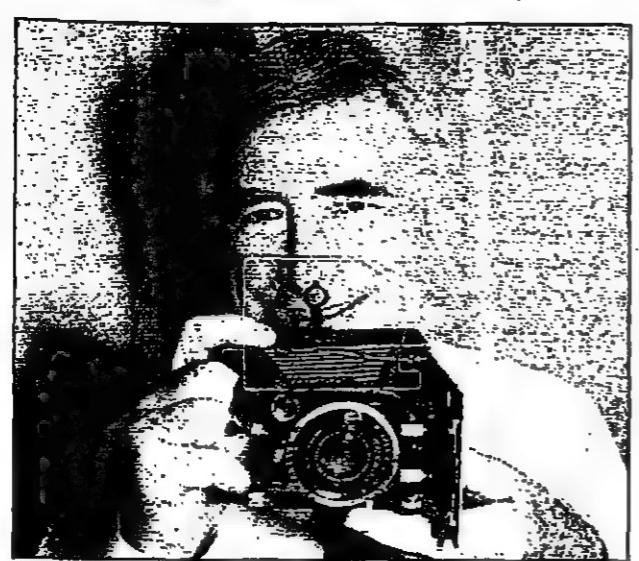
The retailers themselves have also been telling cautious tales about trading, with the likes of Kingfisher, down 12p at 843p, saying that it was finding the going difficult. This admission has been putting the stores sector under increasing pressure.

STOREHOUSE was a casualty, falling 5p to 230p, as SBC Warburg Dillon Read downgraded its profit forecast for the current year by £5 million to £125 million. Despite this it still likes the shares and has been telling clients to "add" to their holdings.

Societe Generale Strauss Turnbull, the broker, has also taken a red pencil to its profit forecast for Dixons, which is headed by Sir Stanley Kalms, blaming a lacklustre sales performance. It has lopped £10 million off its original £340 million. The shares fell 8p to 56p.

Other stores groups to close easier included Harvey Nichols, down 4p to 188p, Boots, 19p at 881p, French Connection, 71p at 382p, Hamleys, 12p at 267p, JJB Sports, 54p at 658p, Marks & Spencer, 20p at 1154p, and Next, 20p at 674p. However, Marks & Spencer rallied 9p to 533p. Credit Lyonnais Laing, the broker, has been telling clients the shares have fallen too far.

Overnight losses in New York were matched by those in Tokyo, the food supplier, had filed for bankruptcy. This had investors racing for cover at the start of trading in London. Matters were made worse for traders by the expiry of the December options and financial futures. The "double ditching" hour was the first real test for the Sets computerised trading system, which matches buyer with seller among the top 100 companies. It appears to have come



Sir Stanley Kalms saw Dixons shares fall 8p to 56p

through the ordeal unscathed and without any of the market manipulation that some officials had feared.

But with the London market having overcome the expiry deadline, it was then knocked for six by fresh falls in New York where the Dow Jones industrial average plunged almost 270 points at one stage. Despite this, the FTSE 100

scared 93p to 245p on the news of an agreed £100 million bid from Flint Ink, the US group. The terms value the printing inks group at 245p.

It is the third such bid in the specialist chemicals sector during the past month. Allied Colloids, up lighter at 164p, is currently fighting off a bid from Hercules, another American group, while Hollifield Chemicals, steady at 229p, has accepted terms from Yule Cotto, unchanged at 288p.

Dragon Oil has struck it rich. Once again it has discovered gas resources off the coast of Thailand. The shares closed 42p higher at 70p having come up from a low of 21p this year.

Plans for a restructuring and boardroom reshuffle were good news for Crighton's, up 15p at 352p. The household products group has appointed Barry Dale as chairman to target suitable acquisitions.

The market had to contend with a church of profit warnings. Peterhead Group nursed a fall of 6p at 312p. It says earnings per share will fall "substantially short of market forecasts". The group blamed significant losses at its International Cranes division which is to be sold or closed.

There was also a setback for American Port Services, down 24p at 134p, after warning that profits for the year to December will fall below expectations. The group which owns and operates airport and seaport services blamed currency turmoil in the Far East. Time Products was another casualty, tumbling 32p to 171p after revealing that trading at its luxury watch division had been below expectations.

□ **GILT EDGED:** The turmoil on world equity markets encouraged investors to switch to the comparative safety of the bond markets where the high yields are proving attractive.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt stayed at 12111/4 in moderate trading.

In longs Treasury 8 per cent 2002 climbed 1211/4 to 12121/4, while among shorter-dated issues, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was seven ticks better at 10102.

□ **NEW YORK:** The broad-based sale of US shares continued, with technology and blue-chip companies particularly affected. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 177.65 to 7,668.85 at midday.

Old English Pubs rose 24p to 293p. It has apparently become a target for Jayesh Mehta, the pharmacist from Middlesex who made a name for himself this year as an investment pundit. He has since launched his own unit trust with the backing of Sir John Templeton, the financier, and Stanislas Yassukovich, the broker.

index managed to close above its worst of the day finishing 148.1 down at 5,020.2 having dipped below the 5,000 level briefly to touch a low for the day of 4,985.7. It stretched the fall on the week to 25 points. A total of 862 million shares had changed hands by the close.

The overnight losses in Asia took their toll of the usual companies with exposure to the region. HSBC dropped 45p to 151.25, Standard Chartered 32p to 655p. Cable &

because of its referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, cannot proceed until both sides get approval from the US authorities.

Now keep an eye on Southwicks, 2p easier at 492p, which is still regarded as a takeover target. A previous bid by National Power, 13p down at 585p, was blocked back in 1995.

One of the best performances of the day was reserved for Manders, which

closed 45p to 460p. Profits warning from its International business, Sheld Diagnostic, 702p to 440p, Nycomed Amersham 222.50p to 132.25p, Marks & Spencer 583p to 179p, Scrutons 310p to 440p, Country Casuals 121p to 288p, Crofton 265p to 185p, Restructuring planned at Manders, 245p to 84p.

MOVES OF THE WEEK

	Current price	Week's change	Reason
Cash Stores	122.25p	-83p	Awaiting bid development
Chad's International	100.50p	+10p	Licensing deal delay
Shield Diagnostic	702.50p	-45p	Johns FTSE 200
Nycomed Amersham	222.50p	+132.25p	Johns FTSE 200
Marks & Spencer	583p	-179p	Talk of baron broker
Scrutons	310p	+440p	Bid approach
Country Casuals	121p	+288p	Fresh bid approach
Crofton	265p	+185p	Restructuring planned
Manders	245p	+84p	Agreed bid Flint Ink

CLOSING PRICES Page 22

COMMODITIES

	Current price	Change	Reason
Cocoa	102.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
May 98	103.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Mar 98	103.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jul 98	103.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Oct 98	103.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Dec 98	103.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
COFFEE (S)	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jan 98	101.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Feb 98	101.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Mar 98	101.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Apr 98	101.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
May 98	101.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
WHITE SUGAR (P&G)	206.07p	+0.07p	Settlement
Feb 98	206.07p	+0.07p	Settlement
Mar 98	206.07p	+0.07p	Settlement
Apr 98	206.07p	+0.07p	Settlement
BRENT (60pence)	162.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jan 98	162.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Feb 98	162.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Mar 98	162.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Apr 98	162.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
May 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jun 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jul 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Aug 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Sep 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
OCTOBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
NOVEMBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
DECEMBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
LIFFE OPTIONS	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Jan 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Feb 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Mar 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
Apr 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
May 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
JULY 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
SEPTEMBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
NOVEMBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
DECEMBER 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
BRITISH COFFEE (S)	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
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Apr 98	100.50p	+0.50p	Settlement
May 98	100.50p		

NEWS

Porter is ordered to repay £27m

■ The High Court branded Dame Shirley Porter and a former colleague liars as it upheld a £27 million surcharge imposed by the district auditor in the Westminster City Council homes-for-votes affair. The court ruled that John Magill, Westminster's district auditor, had acted lawfully and correctly when ordering the repayment from Dame Shirley, Tory council leader at the time, and her deputy David Weeks Pages 1, 10

GPs' secret code labels problem patients

■ Patients have been given an insight into the codes GPs use to alert colleagues to difficult customers. Strange initials on medical notes have little to do with physical conditions and a lot to do with what a doctor thinks of the patient Page 1

Two-week Christmas

The longest Christmas began with record numbers heading for a two-week holiday Page 1

Britons killed

Three Britons were on board a jet which crashed in Indonesia with the loss of all 104 passengers and crew Page 1

Welcome for Emperor

Second World War veterans seeking compensation said they would treat with dignity the first state visit to Britain of Emperor Akihito of Japan Page 2

Rugby star quits

Gwyn Jones, 25, the Wales rugby captain hurt during a match last Saturday, has been forced to retire Page 5

Souvenir success

Lawyers representing the estate of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, have won a court ruling that gives her family control of the potential huge souvenir trade Page 7

Tory leader marries at Westminster

■ William and Ffion Hague flew off to a honeymoon hideaway after a traditional wedding in the crypt chapel at the Palace of Westminster. Outside they were applauded by hundreds of well-wishers as they kissed for cameras Pages 1, 3

First in flying

As stunts go it is one of the oldest, but this week critics hailed flying scenes in the National Theatre's *Peter Pan* production as possibly the most realistic Page 8

Memorial Mass

The parents of a Frenchwoman murdered at her Irish home arrived for a memorial Mass Page 9

Keeping Flat in family

Giovanni Agnelli's decision to bring his grandson John Elkann, 21, into the Fiat boardroom was greeted as a bold bid to keep "family control" Page 13

MIS 'setback'

Russia's counter-intelligence service head said Britain's Russian espionage operations had been set back 20 years Page 14

Flu fears grow

A leading flu expert arrived in Hong Kong as fears grew over "chicken flu" Page 15



The Greek actress Maria Pambouki, right, lights an Olympic torch in a ceremony before February's Nagano Winter Games

NEWS FEATURES**BIG CLIMB**

Climbers and photographers brought back footage of the scaling of Everest, shot in the Imax format — a success marred by tragedy when eight other climbers died on one day Page 19

OPEN GATES

The lakeside stronghold of the world's richest man is a \$32 million labyrinthine monument to rustic chic Page 11

VALERIE GROVE

Lauren Booth poses for a noon photograph, smoking a cigarette and drinking champagne with a cheering absence of new Labour qualms Page 17

OPINION

Crying chicken: With antibiotics, vaccines, and an ability to detect a new flu outbreak from one case, humans should celebrate their power Page 19

DUTCH COURAGE: The raid sends out important messages — to Bosnian communists harbouring war criminals, and to The Netherlands, contributors to the Stabilisation Force Page 19

LETTERS

Bosnian intervention: class in society; EU spokesmen's role; truth about Santa Page 19

COOKING

Simon Jenkins: Edmund Burke's bitter words hover over those behind the Greenwich dome Page 18

Magnus Lindester: Thabo Mbeki has been accorded notices from the barely respectful to the niggardly. It is hard to equate them with the Thabo Mbeki I know Page 18

CONTINUATION

Lillian Disney, wife of Walt and inventor of Mickey Mouse name; Cecil Kennedy, flower painter; Francis Paudras, denizen of jazz demi-monde Page 21

EUROTUNNEL

The British and French Governments have extended the channel tunnel operators' franchise from 2052 to 2086 Page 23

POWER: Britain is to allow a US bid for the Energy Group Page 23

MARKETS: The FTSE 100 fell 14.8 points to close at 5020.2. Sterling rose to \$1.6690 and to DM2.9518 Page 27

WEEKEND MONEY

New debit? Accountants fear national insurance contributions could rise in next year's Budget Page 56

CRICKET

An unbeaten 66 by Graham Thorpe steered England to a three-wicket victory over West Indies in the Champions Trophy final in Sharjah Page 29

FOOTBALL

Steve McManaman advocates a winter break for the English game Page 35

RUGBY UNION

The visit of Pau in the Heineken Cup semi-finals is an opportunity for Bath to make a statement on their own behalf and for English rugby as a whole Page 37

SECTIONS**MAGAZINE**

Ruff stuff: How top choirs pitch for the best boy choristers Page 8
Staying power: Two of London's grander hotels Page 14
Christmas Quiz: Trivia test for '97 Page 22
Fashion: All those trimmings Page 28
Food: No turkey? Page 35

WEEKEND

The One: Seeking that all-too-elusive Christmas chart-topper Pages 1, 3
Fashion: Stick your neck out, fake jewels are fun Page 8
Leaping it up: Reindeer back in Scotland Page 11
Travel: Barbados: Dublin; Stockholm: skiing in America Pages 15-20

Vision

14-day television guide, plus a week's radio

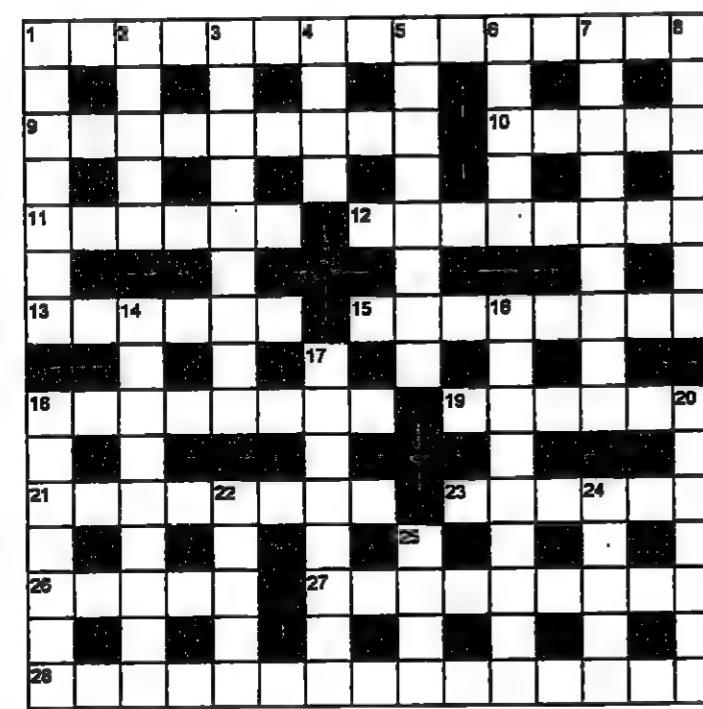


Discover the spooky side of the Christmas season

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,668

A £20 book token will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The names of the winners and the solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address



ACROSS
1 Protective cladding needed if, say, going away to school (15).
9 Stemma is called for in French trip round old city (9).
10 Roman town initially on seafronts though inland afterwards (5).
11 Type or sort of bean (6).
12 One enters Crete's old resort intended for select few (8).
13 Run down part of army base (6).
14 German dramatist, married with English family (8).
18 Stray animal's cry, held back by a whip (5,3).
19 Lovers boats holding 50 (6).
21 Start to carve a head and neck (8).
23 Injury resulting from run in the country (6).
26 Religious body involved in rule-making (5).
27 Party with children not the main affair (4-5).
28 Went off to a binge, I heard? Pretended not to notice (6,1,5,3).

DOWN
1 Destroyer's crew at sea with king and queen (7).
2 Solution to Puzzle No 20,662

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO 20,667
WIMP ALPENSTOICK
ARCHAISM HOBNOB
NO C'S S K Y R
CRUDE ORCHESTRA
E P S N R A S
SHOCKING PINK
W C I E P O L A
REAPPOINTING
E R V W D S B
TEDDYBEAR CUTRIE
C I D D I L R A
HANGUP STRIKING
S E A N E N I
DELUXE PROFOUND
T R E W E E K S W I N N E R S : E J Ruddell, Alastair Hanks, G F Ayling, Lewisham, London; P. Beatty, Stockton-on-Tees; M Leyton, Wellesbourne, Warwick; J J Owens, Herefordwest, Pembs.

LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: E J Ruddell, Alastair Hanks, G F Ayling, Lewisham, London; P. Beatty, Stockton-on-Tees; M Leyton, Wellesbourne, Warwick; J J Owens, Herefordwest, Pembs.

AA INFORMATION

UK Weather: All regions
0336 444 910
0336 401 410
Inside M25
0336 401 766
M25 and Link Roads
0336 401 767
Highways
0336 401 957
Contaminated Europe
0336 401 910
Channel crossing
0336 401 282
Motors to Heathrow & Gatwick airports
0336 407 501

Weather by Fax
0336 401 000
0336 401 001
0336 401 002
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0336 401 004
0336 401 005
0336 401 006
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EQUESTRIANISM: FRENCH NEWCOMER WINS JUMP-OFF TO TAKE CHRISTMAS CRACKER STAKES

Caumont leaves world's best trailing

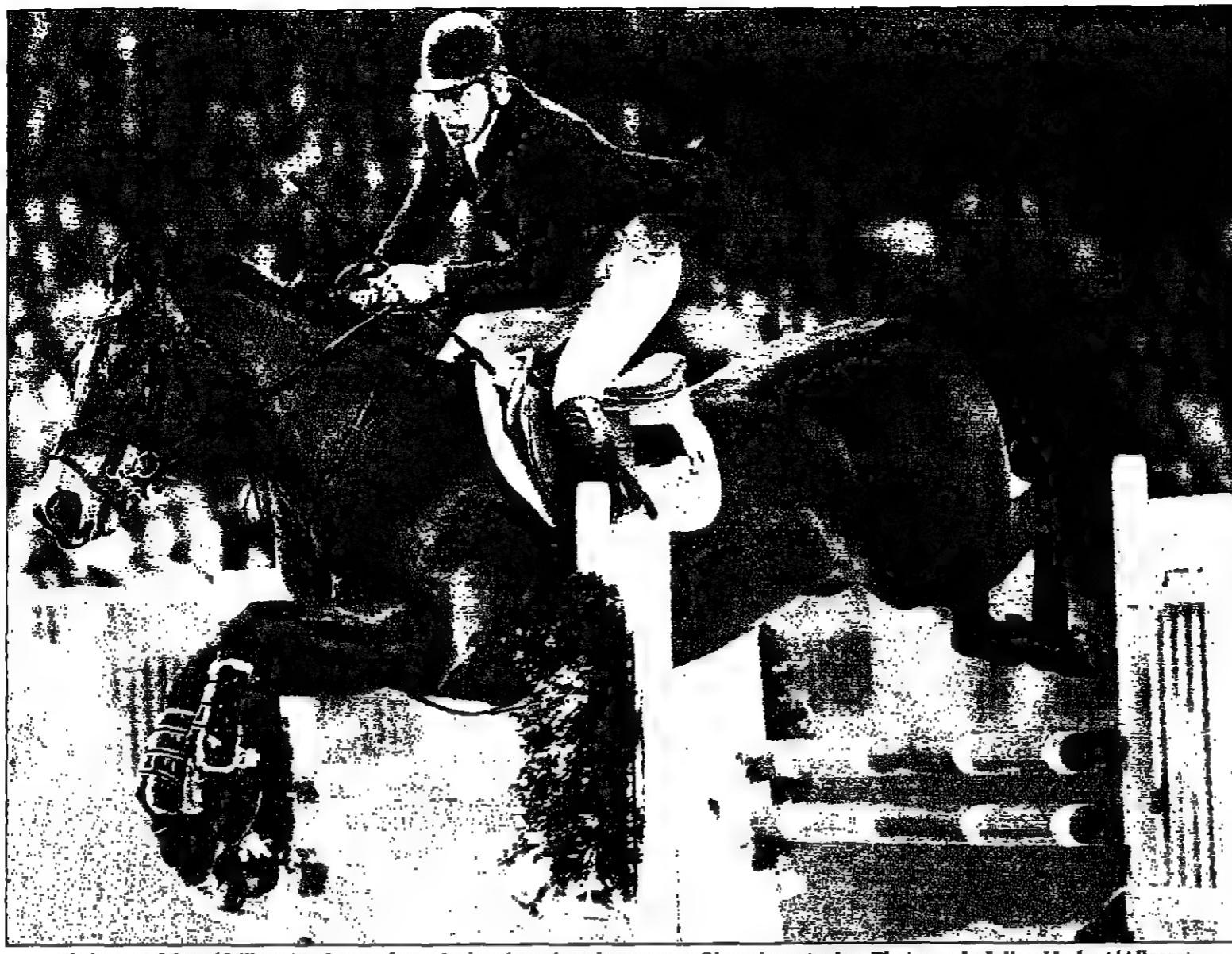
By JENNY MACARTHUR

XAVIER CAUMONT, ranked No 165 in the world and competing in Great Britain for the first time, upset the formbook at the Olympia showjumping championships yesterday when he and his mare, Baladine du Mesnil, outjumped a host of Europe's top partnerships to win the Christmas Cracker Stakes, the main event of the afternoon.

The Frenchman, 42, one of only two riders in a 32-strong field to go clear over a demanding course, had the satisfaction of relegating Ludger Beerbaum, the European champion, to second place, on Sprehe Rush On, and Franck Sloothaak, the world champion, to third, on San Patrignano Cassini.

RESULTS

THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER: 1. Baladine du Mesnil & Caumont, Fri 0 or 37.2% 2. Sprehe Rush On & Beerbaum, Ger 8 in 30.7% 3. San Patrignano Cassini & Sloothaak, Neth 10.5 in 30.7% 4. The Holly Parts Relay; 1. Santa's Echo II Stockdale GBR and Connor (W France) GBR 52.5% 2. Heston & Doherty (Ireland) 52.5% 3. Hervé P. Raymakers, Holl 50.9% 3. Virtual Village JJ in Skilton (GBR) and Virtual Village Effect M. van der Goot 51.5% 5. The Holly Parts Relay; 1. Santa's Echo II Stockdale GBR and Connor (W France) GBR 52.5% 6. Heston & Doherty (Ireland) 52.5% 7. Hervé P. Raymakers, Holl 50.9% 3. Virtual Village JJ in Skilton (GBR) and Virtual Village Effect M. van der Goot 51.5% 8. The Holly Parts Relay; 1. Santa's Echo II Stockdale GBR and Connor (W France) GBR 52.5% 9. Heston & Doherty (Ireland) 52.5% 10. Virtual Village Two Step (M. Whitaker) 0 or 30.6% 3. Virtual Village Two Step (M. Whitaker) 0 or 30.6% 3. T'Alme (P. Chantier, Irel) 0 or 30.6%



Skelton, on Virtual Village JJ, clears a fence during the pairs relay event at Olympia yesterday. Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

"She is formidable," Caumont said of his eight-year-old mare, who has had since she was six months old. The same might be said of her rider, Caumont, whose name had barely been whispered on the international scene six months ago, jumped in his first World Cup show in Prague in September, where he and Baladine were fifth in the qualifier.

Earlier this month, Patrick Caron, the France team manager, sent him to the Seville show to gain more experience. Caumont, who has a stud in the southwest of France and has made his name bringing on young horses, promptly won the World Cup qualifier there. The success gave him last-minute entry to Olympia and the chance to compete, for the first time, alongside nine of the top ten riders in the world rankings.

ICE SKATING

Lipinski aims to get back on her feet

FROM ANGELA COURT IN MUNICH

WITH the Winter Olympic Games less than eight weeks away, a handful of the world's leading figure skaters will be seeking to establish themselves this weekend at the ISU Championships Series Final here. The competitors have qualified through various internationals and, while the winners will leave richer (a gold medal-winner gets \$50,000, which is about £30,000), the honour in Munich far overshadows the money.

Attention in the women's event will centre on Tara Lipinski, of the United States, who, in March, became the youngest world champion at 14 but has yet to win this season.



Lipinski: loss of form

In Skate America and Trophée Lalique internationals, she could manage only second place behind Michelle Kwan, her fellow American, and Laetitia Hubert, of France, respectively.

Kwan and Hubert have withdrawn because of injury, leaving Lipinski an easier task here. Her main challenge appears to come from Irina Slutskaya, twice the European champion, and Tanja Szewczenko, of Germany, the 1994 world bronze medal-winner.

For the men, this competition will provide the final pre-Olympic meeting between Elvis Stojko, of Canada, the world champion, and the 1996 world champion, Todd Eldredge, of the United States.

Pasha Grishuk, the European, Olympic and world champion, and Evgeny Platov, of Russia, are expected to lead the ice dance line-up, while the pairs skaters, Mandy Wötzl and Ingo Steuer, of Germany, will hope to build on the world title that they won in March.

However, the pair attracting most interest here are Xue Shen and Hongbo Zhao, of China. Yet to break into the world's top ten, they have already beaten several higher-ranked couples to qualify.

Sri Lanka offer easier challenge

FROM THIRSY PETROPOULOS IN GHAZIABAD

play their quarter-final match against Ireland in Bombay on December 23.

It would be wrong at this stage for England to panic and change their approach. They have some talented players and though the bowling has been disappointing at times, it is important to note how far superior Australia are to any other side on view

second, superbly-judged clear round.

In the jump-off, Beerbaum, the first to go, hit the last two fences. Caumont, busy warming up, had not watched him, but was told as he entered the ring that a slow clear round or only one fence down would be sufficient to win. Negotiating the shortened six-fence course with the coolness of a seasoned international, he went clear.

The Whitakers' flying start to the show in the Christmas

Tree Stakes on Thursday night had the 6,000-strong crowd in the Grand Hall stamping their approval. John Whitaker, the bookmakers' favourite for the Volvo World Cup qualifier today, produced a lightning-fast round on the 17-year-old Virtual Village Welham to finish the 16-horse jump-off 0.07sec ahead of his brother on Virtual Village Two Step, Peter Charles, of Ireland, the former European champion, took third place on his prolific winner, T'Alme.

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William Fox-Pitt, winner of

a team gold and an individual bronze medal at the Open European three-day event championships in September, was presented with the British Equestrian Writers' Association's trophy for the Equestrian personality of the year at Olympia yesterday. His horse, Cosmopolitan, was named the British Equestrian Insurance Brokers' event horse of the year.

Talking Horse, page 39

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Bent Turnstile Man obsolete

The news that football attendances are up for the tenth consecutive season is greeted by the shallow modern observer as proof positive that a rainbow now sits around the shoulders of our national game. Yet those of us who know the industry from the inside will see this grim statistic as one more example of the shedding of one's great and treasured traditions, for, if official attendances are steadily rising, it can only mean one thing: we are in the twilight years of that tireless and reassuring animal, the Bent Turnstile Man.

There was a time when no club was too big or too small that it didn't have within its set-up a small group of independent and hard-working employees — often ex-pros themselves — who were as my father would put it, "very approachable". It wasn't so much that their door was always open, but, thanks to their philosophy, the club's was. For these were the Bent Turnstile Men. No matter how much ticket prices rose, no matter from where in a ground you wished to view the match, no matter how "sold out" a fixture was, the Bent Turnstile Men could always sort something out.

My earliest memory of attending Millwall is of being lifted high over the turnstiles, week in, week out, as my dad slipped the grinning old boy in the booth a fraction of the advertised entrance fee. Under the keen stewardship of these wily and reasonable venturers, huge sections of the public were allowed to vanish from the balance sheet like the unemployed at election time or listeners from Radio Three.

Indeed, despite self-satisfied PR about growing gates, I honestly feel the amount of people watching professional football has never been lower. The old-time Bent Turnstile Man has been replaced with revolting oily bow-tied sales assistants with no feeling for football who sit at generic laser-printing computer screens that can cough out anything from theatre tickets to prescriptions for penicillin. Approach one of these efficient but naive drones with a wink and



three £1 coins and they react like Drew Barrymore does when she first sees E.T.

Perhaps my favourite tale of turnstile initiative came from a supporter of Manchester City who took the whole theme of private enterprise to a heroic and magnificient extreme.

During City's last spell in the lower leagues, one of their Easter fixtures took them to Home Park, Plymouth. On arrival at the away supporters' end, my friend noticed that only two entrances were open — both at the far right of the ground and both with considerable queues. Outraged at this slice of West Country shtick, he sought to alert the powers of Plymouth to the inconvenience and danger that they were creating and began hammering at the door of a turnstile on the left. To his surprise, the door was not bolted and swung open, invitingly. Home Park yawned before him.

It is here that a lesser intellect might have simply seen the invitation for the slice of sheer goose it was and, with an energetic bound, entered the arena. But not Clive.

Sorry, I mean, Mr X. He, like Bill Gates and Percy "Cats Eyes" Shaw before him, studied the market and saw a vacancy for a bright young chancer. He climbed on to the counter, removed his scarf, sat himself down on the opposite side and announced the pitch open for business. Within ten minutes, and he insists minimal advertising, his post had taken more than £150. So great was the trade that he even smiled cheerfully whenever one of his unknowing fellow Mancs called him "yokel" and "bumpkin".

His tariffs, it seems, were flexible

and rather than charge a twenty

with an already trousered tanner,

he would accept whatever loose

change his customer had in his

pocket. The only time he aroused

the suspicion of onlookers that he

was not a *bona fide* representative

of Plymouth Argyle FC was when

he began enjoying the gag a little

too much and allowed access to a

group of pretty girls in exchange for

the bag of summatas they had with

them. Eventually, he decided

enough was good as a feast and,

during an appropriate hull, walked

in and mingled with the mob while

suddenly noticing how little he

carried about the result.

Naturally, he did not show up on



Tottenham's appointment of Christian Gross continued the English game's fad for overseas coaches

Continental codswallop

As far back as, well it was only a couple of weeks ago actually, I trumpeted the opinion that Christian Gross was the pin whose appointment would forever burst the bubble on the idiotic notion that continental managers generally knew something that British managers didn't. Now it seems that piece has become the standard work-on-the subject for Fleet Street.

Last weekend — with Arsenal's paper tigers ominously exposed yet again, Chelsea's inconsistent laps running round in pleasing but pointless circles and Tottenham's latest slapstick fiasco — must have been the sweetest of George Graham's or Ron Atkinson's, or come to that, David Pleat's life. For, varying though the Brit manager's level of skills may be, how galling must the last couple of years have been for them, the Big Idea being that modern football can only be glimpsed if masterminded courtesy of some genius-on-paper from

the EU. You know the ballyhoo: Had a success in the French league, Italian league, Swiss league? Come to England, we've totally lost the plot! Bring your pals across too! After all, one league is pretty much like another, right? Football is football, isn't it? It's won and lost on paper, yes? I mean, you may not know what a match like Arsenal v Tottenham or Newcastle against Sunderland means, but passion's outa fashion! Jack! You don't need heart, you need a reputation! It's all about method and technique, Monique! (Subject to contract and conditions, natch.)

Anyone who still clings to the hype about the inherent superiority of "abroad" need only to ponder the mess at Highbury. Oh sure, they are playing some good football, but the wake-up call comes in a simple yes or no answer to the following questions. A: Is this the most expensive Arsenal side you've ever seen? and B: Is it the best? So what is Arsène Wenger all about? And if he was British and known to us as *la Craeme Souress*, wouldn't he be under a lot more pressure by now? Guilty meanwhile, while colourful, sexy and very Chelsea, is no more a managerial genius than, say, Steve Coppell.

There is, and always has been, a wide range of nationality that can be widely relied on for success on these shores and that is the Scottish. Dalglish, Graham, Stein, Shankly, Ferguson, Charlton (let us not quibble over a few miles). Good Lord, the only time the mighty Lions breached the rare air of the top flight we were under the wing of John Docherty and Frank McLintock. So, Man United are going to walk the league and three clubs who might have been once considered serious competition lie tittering on the towpath, distracted victims of a specious ideology and paying the price for knee-jerk reactions during the era of home soccer's self-loathing.

Chance to go down a bomb

A discussion heats up on The Most Dangerous Pitch In The World. An early leader is the pitch in Cornwall, which, if the officials aren't totally attentive, will become cut off by the tide that will, unless help arrives, wash the two teams out to sea. This is then trumped by the field in Derbyshire, which has a tree growing on the left wing. Many, apparently, is the head wound that has resulted from a reckless heads-down Giggs-style flyer by a forgetful No 11.

This, in turn, gives way to an East London venue, where two twisted iron bars stick, Excalibur-style, from the turf inside the six-yard box, casually beckoning reminders of a foundry that once stood on the spot. Keen appreciation is shown of the Walsall goals that stand within four feet of a 60ft drop to railway lines, but all of these suddenly shrink into mere Chelsea-style whirling when a flood of calls from ex-squaddies tell us of truth. The Most Dangerous Pitch In The World. It is in western Germany and sits but a matter of feet above an underground Nazi munitions dump judged too temperamental to excavate. The pitch is almost constant use, although players must not wear studs and the referee must not use a metallic whistle.

Reflecting on this unorthodox/suicidal park, I think about poor tortured Ian Wright, my favourite footballer these days. Perhaps here await the perfect Viking funeral for such a leathery old warrior.

Rather than fade in the memory by stepping down a division or going to some morgue like Charlton, might it not be fitting if Ian were allowed to detonate this insane rectangle in one last outburst, stomping around until that famous Wright right boot hits the correct spot and *ka-boom!* The only alternative is to wind up like the dazed and struggling Garth Crooks. Surely not even Peter Schmeichel would wish him that.

Xmas break

I am off to submerge myself in glorious Christmas for two weeks chums, and I do not intend to think, watch or converse about football one little bit. That is how I have always done things. I leave you with three predictions. By the time I return, Man Utd will be nine points clear. Christian Gross will have resigned. Clough-style, saying the whole thing was a big misjudgment and his wife thinks London stinks. Prince Naseem will have won in the fourth and have America under his sweaty waistband. By the time you read this, at least one of these will have been tested and by it you may judge the others. As usual, please, no wagering. Merry Christmas everyone.

The conflicting evidence I receive on whether a steam train is buried beneath the centre spot at Wembley Stadium makes the Louis Woodward trial read like an open and shut case. Most correspondents seem to think there is, but I am led to believe that these people simply want there to be a steam train under Wembley Stadium. The most consistent theme tells of a small locomotive that was used for ferrying much of the heavy timber and steel around the site during the period of the ground's construction. For reasons that vary from "high winds" to

"industrial sabotage", this train one day became derailed and plummeted from its raised track into the pit beneath. Quite what the "pit beneath" is nobody illuminates and we are left with the image that England's soccer showpiece was constructed atop the crater of West London's only sunken volcano. Anyhow, rather than attempt to lift the stricken engine back into business, somebody apparently

took the decision to leave it there. More than one account also insists that the hapless driver — who was killed in the spill — was interned where he lay, though I must say I find the notion of any family giving their blessing to the old man being planted in the cab of his train under a football pitch unlikely to say the least.

The only concrete facts to have emerged from this inquiry have been made in passing

and talk of the curse upon Birmingham City's home, St Andrew's. This is a copper-bottomed story that I have long been aware of and was recently taken so seriously by the club that they had an exorcism. The reason for the curse itself is not wildly interesting, but another, more radical, attempt at its lifting during the reign of Barry Fry certainly is. Apparently, the idea was floated that the

traditional way to negate a curse upon property would be to place urine into the soil at the four corners of the pitch. When I asked Barry whether this had been done, he said that no action, however distasteful, had been overlooked in the attempt to lift the cloud over the sleeping giant of the Midlands.

When I further pressed him on who gave

of their time, energy and urine to so aid the club, he merely raised an eyebrow, smiled inscrutably and suggested that his duties did not necessarily end with simply picking the team.

SAILING: SKIPPER FACES UP TO THE POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE

Dalton fights for his reputation

By EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

beginning to suffer again on the yellow and white yacht, which was on almost every pundit's shortlist of pre-race favourites.

"Where will the wind come from first?" Dalton mused. "Probably the west and south, but when you are not moving at all, it's a little hard to say. With less than 900 miles to go, the first boat out of this hole will probably win the leg as there will be no time to catch up again. I've said it

before, but in this race you do need an element of luck and it seems to be something that refuses to run with this boat."

"We had a terrible position this morning and are ready for an even worse one shortly — and this when we had almost got ourselves back on the front row and need a good leg to put the memories of the last leg behind us. We live in hope, but there is nothing to recom-

mend this type of sailing when you really don't have any control on your future."

The worse thing about this Whitbread for Dalton is that it tends to downgrade his undoubted previous achievements in this event. His biggest success was last time out, when he skippered *New Zealand Endeavour* to a crushing win in the maxi class. But there were only four boats in it and some of Dalton's critics predicted that he would be "found out" this time round in a virtual one-design fleet and against some of the best grand prix sailors in the world.

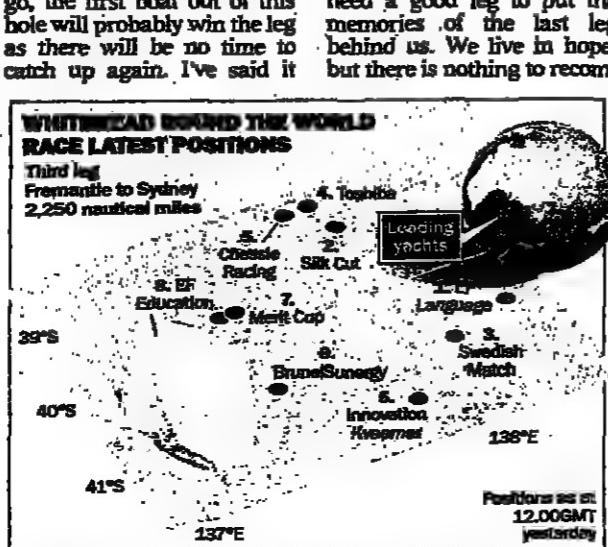
To his credit, Dalton had no qualms about putting his reputation on the line, but he knows that, after a two-boat programme and a smooth and well-funded preparation, there will be no hiding a failure to march up. All is not yet lost, but Dalton's strategy in this race is already seriously out of kilter, bearing in mind that he planned to reach Auckland as overall leader.

With the fleet engrossed in high pressure yesterday, progress had stalled on the way into the Bass Strait. Paul Cayard, in *EF Language*, was again leading, but Lawrie Smith, in *Silk Cut*, was creeping up on him in second place.

I thought that might be one of the moves Chris would make," Obree, who is already pre-selected for the Scotland Commonwealth Games track team, said.

Obree, who builds his own bikes and trains without supervision, now has a personal trainer. Joe Beer, an international duathlon competitor from Bath, will guide the Scot's attempt on the one-hour record.

Obree will ride tomorrow in a ten-mile road time-trial near his Scottish home.



CYCLING

Obree's world plan takes shape

By PETER BRIAN

between 170 and 173 beats a minute. "Not as high as I can achieve on my stationary machine in the garage at home," he said, "but good for this time of the year, since I was using an old road bike."

The Scot's seriousness in returning to international competition could have added spice to the news that Boardman is considering a pursuing comeback at the world track championships in France next year.

Obree will ride tomorrow in a ten-mile road time-trial near his Scottish home.

Champion faces daunting draw

By DAVID REES JONES

"It's a hard draw for me, but an even harder one for Hugh," a confident Gillett said yesterday. "

FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Christmas daze induced by seeing Arsenal outgunned at Chelsea

At Stamford Bridge stadium, I sat down and wept. It was Christmas Day, 1942. I was 11 years old, home from the school holidays, and had yet to see Arsenal lose. I should have been prepared. Arsenal had to face Chelsea, traditionally their nemesis, without half a dozen of their best players because, on Boxing Day, they were obliged to turn out for the Army or the Royal Air Force in a representative match in Cardiff.

And what players! Denis and Leslie Compton, both in the Army, George Marks, goalkeeper for England, in the RAF. Strongly built, dark hair, sleekly groomed, Marks was the man who kept Frank Swift far away from England teams. doomed, the following year, to be sabotaged in his prime by an eye injury when playing for England.

Alf Kirchen, a muscular right winger from Norfolk. FROM VILLAGE BOY TO A LION OF LONDON!, the *Topical Times* annual had cried, some years earlier. Eddie Haigood, peerless left back and captain of England, my own particular hero.

My father was with me, but we had been taken to the game by "Uncle" Willy Warshaw, a devoted Chelsea fan and a member of MCC. It was thanks to him that I once saw Denis Compton in the Lord's tea room.

Willie was an honorary uncle, jolly, bald and round, a flying corps gunner in the Great War, now in the rag trade. With no children of his own, he delighted in taking honorary nephews to Stamford Bridge or Lord's.

"We've got no full backs!" he lamented as I smiled smugly. One of the full backs Chelsea did have was Walter Winterbottom, future manager of England, then an RAF officer attached to the Air Ministry. He was a Manchester United professional then, but

Painful memory of festive football in wartime London

far from the RAF's representative team whose own right back, Laurie Scott, was yet another Arsenal man.

Arsenal's team that chilly, ill-omened morning was a thing of threes and twos.

BRIAN GLANVILLE



patches. The goalkeeper, whose name is forever engraved on my heart, like Calais on Bloody Mary's, was Noel Watson-Smith, of Yorkshire Amateurs, and an amateur the poor fellow looked, as the goals flew in.

Four of them oddly enough, were scored by another amateur, the Walthamstow Avenue centre forward, Bernard Bryant, who made little impact in the following years, but later turned up as a barman in the House of Commons.

Chelsea won 5-2, and at a certain unbearable moment, I burst into tears. A kindly Chelsea fan sitting in front of me turned

round to commiserate: "If all Arsenal supporters were like you..."

Chelsea may have had no full backs, but at outside left was the formidable Billy Liddell, from Liverpool, who, alas for Arsenal, had not been picked for the RAF that Christmas. The inside right was a strapping Scot called Peter McKenna.

The next day, my father and I shunned the return game at Tottenham Hotspur, where Arsenal, bombed out of Highbury, were sharing with Spurs. We listened to the RAF v Army game on the radiogram. A cheerful Uncle Willy appeared at teatime "S-I," he gloated. "What a Christmas."

But hardly to be compared with that prewar Christmas when the whole Clapton Orient team turned up drunk on the platform at Waterloo Station, en route to play at Bournemouth.

The story was told me by the late Ted Crawford, then the Orient centre forward. Not only were all the players "half seas over" after Christmas parties, he related, but there on the platform to greet them was a manager with a barrel of beer: "Hello, boys!"

Orient took the field at Bournemouth. Crawford admitted that each time he went up to head the ball, he saw two of them, and once he collapsed. The referee ran over, perturbed, to ask if he was all right. "There's another of them drunk," shouted a spectator. Orient drew the game 1-1.

There are no Christmas Day games now. Players must be pleased, but supporters love them.

As for Chelsea, 40 years ago they had an amateur international who was said to be paid £20 a match in cash. So, at Christmas, three games were played in swift succession and he would pocket £60, while the pros got the maximum weekly wage of £20. For him, at least, it was always a happy Christmas.

If he is big on laughs, he is

also big on heart. Last week, without telling anyone at the club — or the media — he attended a primary school in Stokesley, near Middlesbrough, where three children have died (in separate unrelated circumstances) within the past year or so. He gave a reading and lifted spirits significantly.

Hendrie has just published *Don't Call Me Happy!*, a breezy résumé of a life in football that has included a free transfer at 20, the emotional trauma of the Bradford fire disaster, seven different clubs, almost 500 league matches and nearly as many pranks. While the book reinforces the belief that professional footballers have much in common with a bunch of giddy 14-year-olds on an outward bound course, it also offers a remarkable insight.

He has managed to distil a personality that is lively and candid into its 200 pages. He admires the professionalism of Howard Wilkinson, for example, but decries that he is "devoid of humour". He is similarly diplomatic when describing Carlton Palmer, whose own mastery of tact ran to abusing Hendrie in the players' lounge while he was talking to a nun and a 77-year-old neighbour. "He showed a lack of professionalism and maturity," Hendrie understates.

"I'm known in the game as a bit of a joker, so I suppose

that's where a lot of the book is coming from. I used to be pretty intense when I was a younger player but I've mellowed out now," he said. His reputation precedes him, so, when he is an hour late for the interview, and a note is thrust into my hands by the hotel staff, trepidation reigns. "Mr Hendry [sic] will arrive soon," it reads. Whether he will arrive dressed as a window cleaner or in his pyjamas is another matter.

Eventually, he shows, and the attire is unmistakably footballer — a bulky nylon coat emblazoned with logos, a pair of jeans and just-washed hair. It was a close call, though, since he had spent the previous day as a "Scouser", cruising the Barnsley night-spots in a violet shell suit with the rest of the Barnsley squad on their annual Christmas get-together. "We were going to have a bad-taste pub crawl at first. We were all going to go as Georgi Hristov," he said. Hristov, the club's Macedonian striker, has arrived in South Yorkshire with a surfeit of polo-necked sweaters and tank tops that have generated

much mirth. The mood in the Barnsley camp has remained high, despite their position at the bottom of the FA Carling Premiership. "Our heads are not down, the spirit is really high. Danny Wilson [the manager] is a good motivator and has worked hard to make sure we have remained positive," he said.

The last time Hendrie encountered a similar spirit was during his six seasons with Middlesbrough. It was eventually destroyed by the arrival of Ravanelli et al. In the book, he provides a fascinating snapshot of life in the Middlesbrough dressing-room during its famously cosmopolitan period. In short, Juninho was "one of the lads" and respected by all, while Ravanelli was a "very selfish guy who cared nothing about team spirit".

He describes an incident when Ravanelli was shaking everyone's hand before taking to the pitch. When he came to Hendrie, who was a substitute, he ignored him. "He clearly believed shaking hands with someone who wasn't even in the team was beneath him. He walked by me as if I was nothing," Hendrie said.

It would appear that much of the media supposition about Middlesbrough at the time was authentic. The foreign players were habitually late for training and did not honour curfews; this, inevitably, had a divisive effect. After a home defeat against Arsenal, Juninho and Ravanelli were practically fighting with one another, with various interpreters explaining to the others that the Italian accused the Brazilian of being "greedy", while the report was that Ravanelli was "jealous".

The last time Hendrie encountered a similar

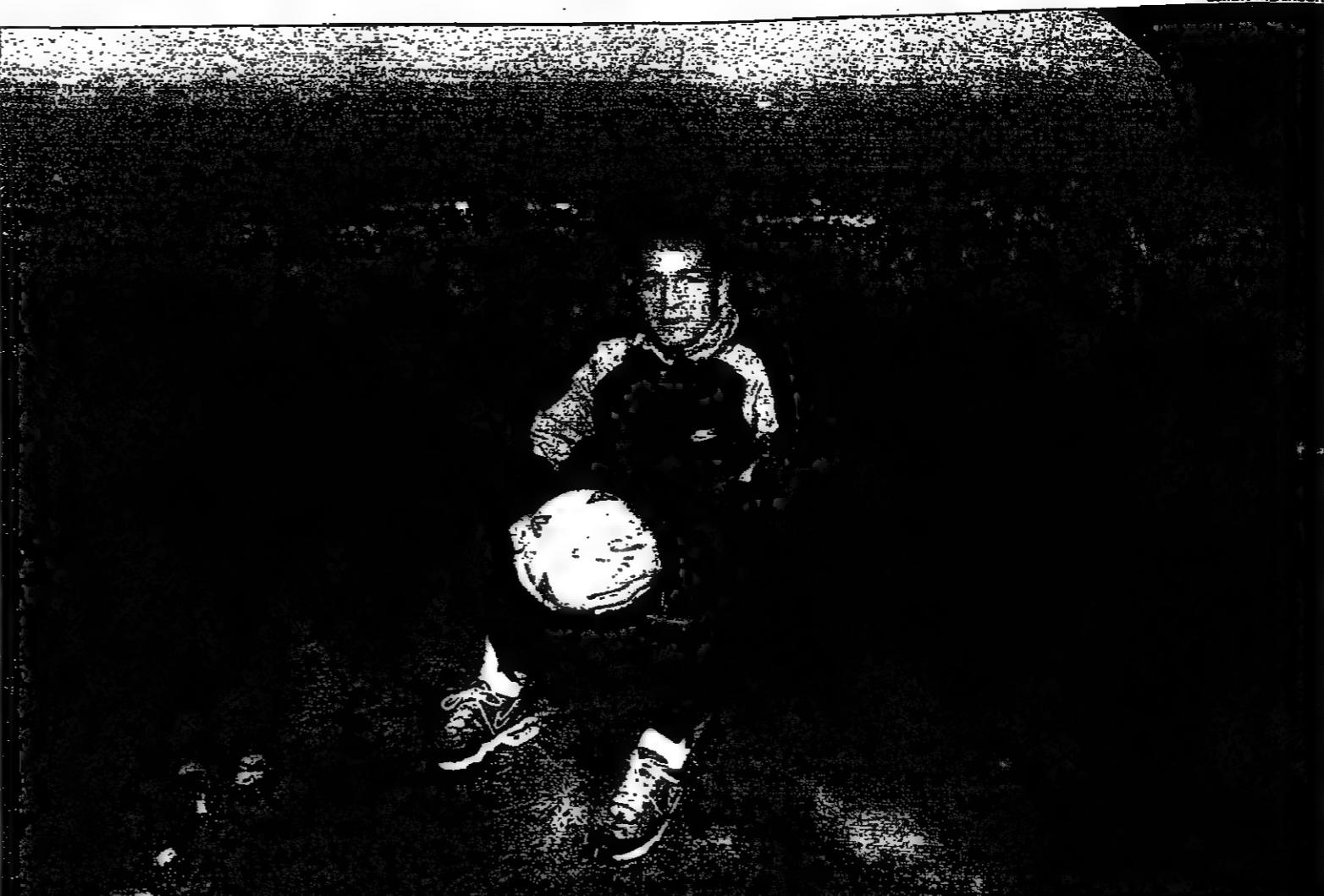
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Barnsley take on Tottenham Hotspur today in another relegation match. Hendrie is not sure whether he will make the team or once more grace the substitutes' bench. Either way, the smile will remain.

In his dispatch this week, Mark Hodkinson tackles the Oakwell joker

SIMON WILKINSON



The mood at Barnsley remains high according to Hendrie, whose new book offers a humorous and revealing insight into a football career

Hendrie plays for laughs

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Water torture calls for desperate measures

LABORATORY technicians examining the drug-testing sample of Mauricio Lopez, a striker in the Argentine second division, were alarmed to discover not a trace of urine ... only beer.

"I couldn't urinate and there was no water at the ground," Lopez told a disciplinary tribunal. "so I started drinking beer."

At the time I remembered what I had to do. I'd already had a couple of litres, but I still couldn't go. So I put a bit of beer in the test tube instead. I understand that I've made a mistake, but right then I wasn't that well. I was a bit tipsy."

Lopez plays for Quilmes — coincidentally, the name of Argentina's most popular beer.

"I'm known in the game as a bit of a joker, so I suppose



"I started four years ago and I bring home copies from wherever I go in the world," Simone said. "I've got over a hundred now. I'm a big admirer of naked women and the lighting and poses make them look better still. When I turn the pages, I feel I'm discovering a different work of art each time." Absolutely.

Unlucky mascots

When Nelson the dog, the Portsmouth mascot, went missing, the top half of the wandering pooch was eventually discovered along the South Coast outside the Dell, home of Southampton. Pompey's much-admired rivals. But where is El Tel, Nelson's replacement? Since the well-documented financial troubles at the struggling Nationwide League first division club, El Tel — a 7ft effigy of Terry Venables — has failed to put in an appearance at Fratton Park. Sounds vaguely familiar.

Cold comfort

Simon Milton, the Ipswich Town midfield player, had endured a lengthy training session in the fresh Suffolk air when he was invited to lunch at Portman Road to meet the guest of David Sheepshanks, the Ipswich and Football League chairman.

When Milton was asked by the VIP as to how the training had gone, he replied:

"Fine, but it was a bit cold."

Sir Randolph Fierens, the renowned polar explorer, was strangely unsympathetic.

Naked truth

Most footballers, when asked to list their favourite pastimes, trot out the same old line — smoking, golf, DIY, etc. Not so Marco Simone, the former Italy striker, who plays for Paris Saint-Germain. He collects copies of *Playboy*, the magazine for the more discerning top-shelf reader.

Charity begins at home

Desperate times call for desperate measures and every little bit helps. Oxford United, deep in debt and forced to invite offers for every player, resorted to a collection at the recent home match against Queens Park Rangers. United fans gave freely, but it is unlikely that the contents of the nine buckets used will have made much of a dent in the £10 million shortfall.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: Two of the Swindon Town substitutes for the away fixture against Charlton Athletic were Cow and Bullock.

Halifax happy raising home interest rates

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL BY WALTER GAMMIE

HALIFAX Town go into a first versus second confrontation against Hednesford Town this afternoon fortified by a perfect record of ten wins out of ten in Vauxhall Conference matches at The Shay this season. Their outstanding home form has helped to put Halifax seven points clear of Hednesford, both having played 20 matches.

If there is any encouragement for their visitors, it is in the defeat suffered by Halifax away to Leek Town last Saturday. It was only their second of the season, and against lowly opponents who made play of exploiting what they had observed as a tendency by Halifax to start matches sluggishly. Leek went 2-0 ahead after 22 minutes and then defended that advantage.

Hednesford go into the match having last week enjoyed their now traditional mid-season break in Spain, courtesy of John Baldwin, who doubles as manager and vice-chairman. The trip featured heroics by Charlie Ntamak and Delton Francis, who chased and caught a thief who stole the handbag of an English pensioner in the streets of Torremolinos.

The immediate benefit of the break was not obvious, Hednesford missed the chance of closing the gap on Halifax on Saturday, when they lost for the first time in the Conference since September 27, going down 2-1 away to Hereford United.

The importance of the fixture and the continued force of Halifax's revival is certain to be reflected in the attendance. This season, Halifax have averaged 1,758, more than double last year's 841, and the crowd today is expected to come close to the season's best of 2,453 for the match against Stalybridge Celtic.

Kendall to bid for

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FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Disparate talents united by desire

Gary Neville and his Old Trafford contemporaries have shown that commitment to the Ferguson cause is every bit as important as ability

He sits in the corner of a diner-style restaurant just off the M62 north of Manchester, a young man wholly without artifice and tells his story. Because of the way Gary Neville is, because honesty is his companion, because openness defines his character and candour is his route one, his words form a spellbinding narrative.

Neville can relate the history of the rise and rise of the great Manchester United team of the Nineties like no other. There is no arrogance to mask the weaknesses that he fought, no nonchalance to gloss over the long training-ground hours that he and the other young stars devoted to their dream, no pride to hide the debt he owes to others.

He was there at the beginning of the greatness eight years ago, when he was 14 and Alex Ferguson was struggling to hold on to his job as manager. Travelling up through the youth team and the reserve team with other prodigious talents such as Nicky Butt, Ryan Giggs, David Beckham and Paul Scholes, he was part of the gestation of the team that is now threatening to rule Europe. He was in on the birth.

He admits it readily: he lives for the club that he has supported since he was four. His loyalty to Ferguson and Eric Harrison, the United youth team coach, the men who have made him a regular for club and country, is absolute and unconditional. His philosophy is the Manchester United philosophy. If you want to understand what has helped to make them the team they are today, listen to him.

"When I was 14, I was average among players," Neville said. "I was just a sub for my county team, Greater Manchester. Nicky Butt, my brother, Phil, David Beckham, John O'Kane, Keith Gillespie and Ben Thornley were all playing for national teams. They were the stars. They were playing for their country at schoolboy level and I thought they were the best."

"I was nothing like that and I realised when I was 16 that if I did not give it my all, then I wouldn't have a chance. Eric Harrison, who is someone I would trust with my life, told me what I wanted to hear within the first two or three weeks of me arriving at the club. He said: 'If you listen to me and you do what I say, then you've got a chance.' That was all that I needed to hear; that I did have a chance and that someone believed in me."

"After that, I used to be on the training field until half-past four every afternoon. Even when we weren't training in the afternoons, we still used to go out — myself,

Kendall set to bid £4m for Vlaovic

By DAVID MADDOCK

HOWARD KENDALL will pursue Goran Vlaovic, the Croatia striker, after failing in an attempt to take Ian Wright to Goodison Park.

The Everton manager denied yesterday that he had been involved in talks with Wright, but admitted that he had approached Arsenal over the availability of the England forward, only to be told by Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager, that the striker was not for sale.

Kendall also approached Manchester City in an attempt to sign Uwe Rösler and Georgi Kinkladze, but without success, and has switched his sights to Vlaovic.

The 25-year-old forward was recommended by Slaven Bilic, his Croatian team-mate, and Kendall watched Vlaovic score for his club, Valencia, against Deportivo La Coruna on Thursday evening. The Croatian has also scored in every other game at international level. Kendall will table a bid of around £4 million next week.

Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, has finally secured a work permit for Brad Friedel, the United States goalkeeper, after a successful appeal to the Department of Employment. Friedel will arrive at Liverpool next week, completing a £1 million move from Columbus Crew, his American club.

OLIVER HOLT



Beckham, Butt, Scholes, the lot of us. There were 12 or 14 of us and we all got a contract. As a year, we were unbelievable. Eric has said we worked harder than any year he has ever known.

"He could not get us off the training pitch in the morning. We'd have dinner and then we'd be back out at quarter to one when we weren't due out until half past. When training finished at quarter to three, we'd still be there at four. He'd be knocking on his window-telling us to come in and the stewards would be coming out trying to get us off. That was how we were."

"People like me, Giggs, Beck, Butt and Scholz, we have grown up loving Manchester United and I think maybe that shows. I don't think you'll ever see a Man United player give in. I see some players who have got great ability and if they worked hard, they could play for Manchester United, but with their ability alone, they won't. Then I see someone like Ryan Giggs, who has got all the ability in the world and yet he works his backside off every day. If he didn't do that, he wouldn't play for Man United."

Neville has made his work ethic his trademark. Last week, Brian Kidd, the United assistant manager, praised him for the Herculean efforts he made to drag himself up to the level of his peers. A few weeks before that, Peter Schmeichel, the United goalkeeper, said Neville was the one player in the team he admired most, because what he lacked in ability he had compensated for in perseverance and hard work.

Neville himself insists that he still has to compensate for his shortcomings. "If I do not train at the maximum every day," he said, "I don't feel as though I am right in my mind. I have to work harder than the rest to make up for what other people have. I always feel that I have always felt that."



Neville has had to work harder than the likes of Giggs to make up for a shortfall in skill. Now, though, he is a regular for club and country

Now, though, you cannot even see the join between him and his team-mates. Against Aston Villa on Monday, Neville, 22, was United's man of the match, and not just by virtue of solid tackling. There was one sublime first-half flick and one header that an average player might have nodded back into an area of the pitch where it would be up for grabs. Neville flicked it backwards, straight to the feet of Gary Pallister, instead. If he

was indeed behind his colleagues, he has caught up now.

Not that it has gone to his head. There is an authenticity about him, a down-to-earth quality that sets him apart as a throwback to the quiet, unassuming footballing heroes of yesteryear.

That quality was evident on the England tour of the Far East in 1996, when he spotted an overweight photographer toiling along the Great Wall of

China with a heavy bag of equipment and offered to carry it for him. He and his brother, Phil, also an England squad member, are fine role models for a generation of aspiring young footballers, evidence that flair needs hard work to allow it to flourish.

Nike wanted to recruit them to their advertising campaigns. Diadora beat them to the punch. It does not really matter. It is refreshing to see their virtues being recognised.

Neville's modesty is still intact, despite the fact that he has already won two league titles and an FA Cup and become an England regular on the right side of defence. He does not want an agent and he cannot imagine ever asking for a move. A trust has grown up between him and the manager now. To nurture that is what drives him on.

"For the first six months in the first team," he said, "the relationship with the gaffer

was based on fear, but then it becomes respect. When you first get in the first team, he'll have a go at you and it kills you.

"I never forget one of my first games. It was away at Chelsea and I came on as sub at half-time and I didn't play well and after the game he had a go at me. I thought my whole world was falling in. But then on the Monday morning he was saying: 'How are you son, are you OK?' and you think

he's forgotten about it. I don't fear him now. I respect him. If he says something, it goes.

The young lads at the club, we're not his puppets and there are times when you disagree with him and you'll talk with him, but if he says something, you usually take that as being the truth. He sets the standard and he sets the discipline and you follow that. We've grown up with him and the thing that he's got in his favour is that everything he has told us has been the truth.

"When we were 14 and we first signed, he said: 'Look, son, I'm not going to tell you that you're going to play for Manchester United, you could all end up on the scrapheap. But what I will tell you is that if you are good enough, you will play for Manchester United. There is nothing I want more than to see my lads coming through because I know I can trust them.'

"If he's honest with us, which he always has been, that is where the respect comes from and now every time I play football it's for him, Brian Kidd, Eric Harrison, myself and the fans, all those people who had so much faith in me. Even when you are not playing for Manchester United, you are representing the gaffer and the people who have had faith in you.

If you let those people down, that's when the relationship becomes tarnished and then he starts not to trust you. You just lose that respect from him. That must be the worst feeling in the world for a young lad at Manchester United, because you just go.

"Once he doesn't trust you, that's it, you're finished. It was drummed into us from the age of 16: wherever you go and whatever you do, whether you're speaking to a lady in the street or if you're going out wearing the shirt on a Saturday afternoon, always remember that you play for Manchester United."

Gross in unfamiliar territory

Matt Dickinson on the manager fighting

a relegation battle for the first time

"Christian is a very fine coach with an outstanding pedigree in Swiss football," Vögel said, "but the game here does not compare to England. English clubs are huge, there is much more money involved and the expectations are much higher. Unless you have coached extensively throughout Europe, I am not sure you can get a real idea of what is needed."

"Christian did very well in Zurich and had an outstanding reputation in Switzerland, but perhaps that is not the only qualification you need to be a successful manager or coach in England. I hope he

does very well, but it is a huge task and one that he will not have faced before."

Gross admits that he has jumped in at the deep end. "It is a new situation for me because I have never been in relegation trouble before," he said. He prides himself on his skills of motivation, but they have been put to the test as never before by two defeats in which his side has conceded ten goals. Sol Campbell's return after injury today could not have come at a better time and the England defender's spirit, as much as his skill, should ensure no repeat of the surrenders that allowed the Cherries to the bottom of the FA Carling Premiership.

Gross is a desperate situation that Gross claims to have walked into with his eyes wide open, but there are those, including former colleagues, who believe that he did not appreciate the size of the task when he agreed to succeed Gerry Francis on a salary of £300,000 — twice the amount that he received in Switzerland.

Erich Vögel, general manager of Grasshopper Zurich, where Gross came to prominence, is one who, despite his friendship, claims that Gross is struggling to adapt to a club with twice the salaries, four times the crowd and at least ten times the expectation.

Anderton has given Tottenham Hotspur a welcome boost by signing an extension to his contract

sea to score six and Coventry City four.

Gross also believes that he has discovered where the essential weakness of his team lies after some typically methodical analysis. "Of 32 goals conceded, 26 have been in the second half," he said. "To be fresh over the 90 minutes, you have to be in good shape and we have to work on this."

It was a surprise, then, to hear that he has eased off the training regime that had the Tottenham players fearing their five-side kickabouts were about to give way to assault courses and cross-country runs.

There has been no dissent yet, but nor has there been laughter with Gross a stern man at the best of times. "I don't want laughter. I want winners," he said. "It is a critical situation, but we will escape. This is a game we have to win."

Gross concedes that finding recruits is proving troublesome, but there was some good news yesterday when Darren Anderton signed an extension to his contract that will keep him at the club until 2000.

"I believe we will battle our way out of this position," Anderton said and, to prove his optimism, the England winger has not demanded a clause that will allow him to leave should the team be relegated. This afternoon should help indicate whether his faith is justified.

Juventus pursue Dyer

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

JUVENTUS are hoping to fend off interest from Arsenal and Celtic and sign Keiron Dyer, of Ipswich Town. The 18-year-old defender, a regular in the England Under-21 side, could command a transfer fee of up to £5 million, which would be a record for a teenager in Great Britain.

Celtic and Arsenal have been linked with bids of up to £4 million, but Juventus are believed to be ready to make a higher offer after watching Dyer play last week.

The Italian club first became aware of Dyer's talents when he put in an impressive performance for England Under-21 against Italy in Rieti in October. He capped a

magnificent display with the only goal of the match.

Juventus sent representatives to look at Dyer in Ipswich's 2-0 victory over Portsmouth in the Nationwide League first division last Saturday. Dyer suffered a groin strain in the game and had to withdraw from the England Under-21 squad that met Greece on Wednesday. The injury means that he will miss Ipswich's match at Port Vale

this afternoon. George Burley, the Ipswich manager, wants to retain Dyer, but it is believed that he would not be able to resist a multimillion-pound bid.

"We have a number of young players with exceptional talent at Ipswich Town, one of whom is obviously Keiron Dyer," he said, "but I have always said that I don't want to sell any of them."

If Ipswich are forced to sell Dyer, however, the fee would break the British transfer record for a teenager, which was the £3 million that Leeds United paid Charlton Athletic for Lee Bowyer, a midfield player, in 1996.

Nigel Spackman, the Sheffield United manager, has returned to his former club, Chelsea, to strengthen his side's promotion challenge and signed David Lee, the former England Under-21 defender, on a month's loan. Lee goes straight into the side and will make his debut at Bury this afternoon.

The centre back has found his opportunities limited at Stamford Bridge since Ruud Gullit took over as manager last summer. Lee made only one appearance last season, scoring in the 3-1 home victory against Tottenham, but he suffered a broken leg later in the game and only made a return to action two months ago.

Ronnie Wallwork, 20, the Manchester United defender, has joined Carlisle United, of the second division, on a month's loan.



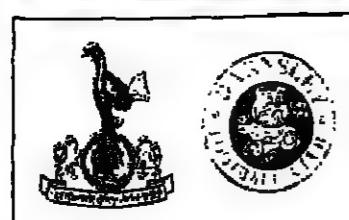
Fixture clash means new date for play-off

THE Football League has moved this season's third division play-off final forward by a day because it clashed with the England international against Saudi Arabia. Glenn Hoddle's side have matches with Chile on February 11 and Saudi Arabia on May 23 next year at Wembley. The Saudi match is on the original date for the play-off final, which has now been moved forward to Friday evening.

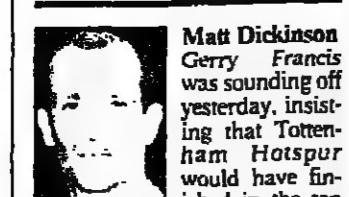
Chris Hull, a spokesman for the Football League, said: "We are delighted to assist Glenn Hoddle's preparations for the World Cup finals next summer. The second and first division play-off finals will take place as scheduled on Sunday, May 24 and Monday, May 25 respectively. Kick-off times have yet to be confirmed.

Kenny Dalglish, the Newcastle United manager, is likely to put an end to Colombia's hopes of playing his team as part of their World Cup preparations. Colombia hoped to fix a date in March, but Dalglish said: "I don't think it will happen, because of a clash with international friendlies."

FOOTBALL SATURDAY



TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
v
BARNESLEY
Today, 3.0



Matt Dickinson
Gerry Francis was sounding off yesterday, insisting that Tottenham Hotspur would have finished in the top half of the table had he stayed.

"But that was not good enough, not for me or the club," he former manager said.

Not good enough? Alan Sugar would probably get down on hands and knees and beg Terry Venables to return as coach if it could guarantee just finishing out of the relegation zone this season. The depth to which Tottenham have sunk in the quicksand at the wrong end of the FA Carling Premiership will be revealed by 4.45pm, when the final whistle blows at the end of this afternoon's intriguing clash against Barnsley.

If the Yorkshire side win, they will leapfrog over Tottenham and leave the London club second from bottom, at best. Should Everton win at Leicester, they could even be rooted to the foot. It is a predicament that Tottenham have been in before, third from bottom in the week before Christmas. It was in 1976 and yes, before you ask, they went on to be relegated five months later.

Those stark statistics alone

should ensure that nobody at White Hart Lane is under any misapprehension about the importance of this afternoon's game. Whether the players can cope under that mounting burden of pressure will be one of the fascinations of a game that will not be for the faint-hearted. Francis claimed that by resigning he would ease the tension at the troubled club; don't try to tell that to Christian Gross, because the new Tottenham coach looks twitchier by the day.

Sol Campbell is fit to return to the defence and his presence is vital after conceding ten goals in two games against Chelsea and Coventry City. With Ramon Vega suspended, Campbell's physical attributes will be needed against Ashley Ward.

The Barnsley striker has been in excellent form recently, even more impressive given that he was sidelined for two months with viral meningitis. His comeback, for the spectacularly unexpected victory at Liverpool, has coincided with an upturn in fortunes for Danny Wilson's team, with their 2-2 draw against Newcastle United last week more proof of new-found resilience.

Wilson is certain to impress on his players the vulnerability of their opponents, but with Campbell restored to the starting line-up, they may be the first victims of a Tottenham revival.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (probable): 4-4-2: I. Robson, C. Parker, S. Bent, J. Wilson — R. Smith, A. Nelson, C. Calderwood, D. Anderson — D. Grealish, L. Ferdinand.

BARNESLEY (probable): 3-5-2: L. Leese — A. Mowatt, D. McMillan, N. Eaden — A. Kean, N. Redden, E. Tinkler, J. Bourne, M. Bullock — A. Ward, A. Liddell.

Referee: M. Reed

■ **TELEVISION:** Today, Match of the Day, BBC1, 10.15pm, brief highlights.

■ **PREDICTION:** Tottenham to save themselves with a narrow victory.



Dane in the dumps: Schmeichel was shattered after the 5-0 defeat at St James' Park, but ecstatic after the title was retained



1 FIRST
11 ELEVEN

FROM CHUMPS TO CHAMPS

Manchester United return to St James' Park tomorrow, the scene of their 5-0 hiding in October last year. Here are 11 other occasions when the champions-in-waiting were soundly beaten

1. Sc'ton 8 Man Utd 3, 26/10/96

One week after the Newcastle debacle, United were thrashed again. "For drama, read crisis", wrote the man from

The Times

2. Aston Villa 5 Liverpool 1, 15/12/76

Bob Paisley's team came close to a treble, but they were no match for Andy Gray, Brian Little and Co

3. Man Utd 2 Everton 5, 20/9/56

The Sabres were smacked and sent to bed early by Everton

4. Burnley 5 Leeds 1, 19/10/68

A shock defeat in one of the few seasons in which Revie's Leeds didn't finish second

5. Man Utd 5 Ipswich 0, 7/4/61

The men from Suffolk were punched at Old Trafford

6. Everton 1 Spurs 4, 25/8/84

After this opening-day mauling, Everton were beaten again in their second game — but it was all smiles by May

7. Liverpool 1 Wolves 5, 7/12/48

When Liverpool really copped it

8. Newcastle 1 Sunderland 0, 5/12/08

The men from Roker roared, but Sunderland finished third and the Magpies swooped for the title

9. Stoke 5 Arsenal 70, 26/8/70

Bertie Mee's Double-winners went to pot in the Potties

10. Wolves 6 Burnley 1, 30/8/60

The Clarets were unctured at Molineux

11. Orient 3 Everton 0, 12/9/63

No, we didn't believe this one either. Orient were relegated at the end of the season while Everton took the title

Compiled by Richard Whitehead

Thanks to Ray Spiller, Association of Football Statisticians, and Bill Edgar



BLACKBURN ROVERS
v
WEST HAM UNITED
Today, 3.0

Nick Szezpanik
One year ago this weekend, Blackburn Rovers were without a game. Mid-dlebrough having taken the unilateral decision to postpone the relegation battle at Ewood Park. They were also without a manager, despite announcing an agreement with Sven Goran Eriksson, the Sampdoria coach, who was to take control at the end of the season.

By March, Eriksson had had second thoughts and one could forgive Jack Walker and company for being grateful, with the benefit of hindsight, that he did. Rovers, under the guidance of the sage of Croydon, Roy Hodgson, now stand in second place in the FA Carling Premiership and have overcome the departures of Henning Berg and Graeme Le Saux with little visible effect on their defence.

Last Saturday's victory against Arsenal at Highbury emphasised the value of a fully-fit Kevin Gallacher.

Unfortunately, his striking partner, Chris Sutton, is suspended for the visit of West Ham United. Martin Dahlin, the logical replacement, is injured and James Beattie, a 19-year-old forward, could make his second appearance, although the improving fitness of Lars Bohinen and Damien Duff gives Hodgson other options.

The visitors are in a run of poor away results. Only Sheffield Wednesday and Barnsley have conceded more goals on their travels.

Stan Lazaridis is still away with the Australia squad and Ludek Miklosko, the goalkeeper, is likely to be missing for several weeks with a neck injury, so the search is on for cover. Craig Forrest, the Canada international, who depurised against Wednesday last week, will continue today. The scoring return of Paul Kitson from injury in that match, to resume his partnership with John Hartson, may raise West Ham hopes, but most of the pair's successes have come at Upton Park.

The temptation to think that a run has to end sometime is natural, but against Blackburn, beaten only once at home? Unlikely.

BLACKBURN ROVERS (probable): 4-4-2: T. Robinson, J. Hartson, S. Lazaridis, C. Haynes, G. Forrest — C. Pearce, T. Sheridan, G. Miklosko, D. Duff — K. Gallacher, J. Wilcock.

WEST HAM UNITED (probable): 3-4-1-2: C. Forster — I. Pearce, R. Ferdinand, D. Unsworth, S. Johnson, S. Lampard, P. Keown — E. Bent, O'Donnell — J. Hartson, P. Nutkin.

Referee: G. Astby

■ **TELEVISION:** Today, Match of the Day, brief highlights.

■ **PREDICTION:** Rovers roll on.



Simon Wilde
Football clubs tend to turn over more new leaves than a bookbinder, but Brian Little, the Aston Villa manager, feels that the Christmas period is the ideal time for his side to consign their mixed form this season to history. With a demanding match against Manchester United behind them and their improbable UEFA Cup run on hold until March, Little sniffs six much-needed points against Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur.

If three points are to be snapped up today, Villa may need their front pair of Stan Collymore and Savo Milosevic to fire. Neither, though, is in the best of spirits: dialsbrough having taken the unilateral decision to postpone the relegation battle at Ewood Park. They were also without a manager, despite announcing an agreement with Sven Goran Eriksson, the Sampdoria coach, who was to take control at the end of the season.

It was with something of a resigned air yesterday that Steve Coppell, the Crystal Palace manager, reflected that his two Italians, Lombardo and Padavano, had been dispatched to Turin for treatment to the injuries (ankle and hamstring respectively) that keep them out today.

"With all due respect to our medical department, in comparison to those at Juventus he

facilities are antiquated," Coppell said. The Italian club employs two full-time doctors, physiotherapists and masseurs, "plus the best medical machinery money can buy". To compound Coppell's problems, Smith, Rodger and Dyer are far from



ASTON VILLA
v
SOUTHAMPTON
Today, 3.0

Collymore has scored twice in 21 games and is taking a lot of flak, lately from Andy Gray, the television pundit, who accused him of failing to live up to Villa's best goalscoring traditions (ie. Gray himself). Milosevic is heading towards a legal dispute with

Keith Pike
It says something perhaps about the priorities of Premiership clubs that their flirtation with all things foreign does not extend to the support needed to keep those highly-paid, highly-rated imports on the field.

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DERBY COUNTY
v
CRYSTAL PALACE
Today, 3.0

certain to be fit and Edwards is suspended.

As bane and breakdowns begin to bite, it is the depth of talent in a squad that counts and that should give Derby County the edge this afternoon. Jim Smith could be without five first-team regulars, including Sturridge, but with plenty of talent in reserve, it would be a brave man to bet against Derby extending their unbeaten record at Pride Park.

DERBY COUNTY (probable): 4-4-2: M. Poole — G. Ross, S. Elliott, S. Evans, L. Cole, D. Powell, C. Powell — F. Blaauw — D. Burton, P. Warchup.

CRYSTAL PALACE (probable): 4-4-2: K. Miller — J. F. Emery, D. Long, J. Thompson, H. Townsend, G. Pearce, S. Rodger, A. Hubber, J. Fletcher, J. Zorzan — N. Sheperley.

Referee: M. Bodenham

■ **TELEVISION:** Today, Match of the Day, brief highlights.

■ **PREDICTION:** Villa to win.



LEEDS UNITED
v
BOLTON WANDERERS
Today, 3.0

Keith Boonen
After the Battle of Stamford Bridge last weekend, George Graham, the Leeds United manager, is anxious that Elland Road should not become known as the Kickin' Fields. Graham swiftly withdrew his criticism of Graham Poll, the referee, after studying footage of the first half against Chelsea, in which eight players were booked and two sent off. Instead, he fined his five offenders almost £20,000 in total.

"I do not want us getting a reputation for foul play, I will not tolerate our image being tarnished," Graham said, arguably 30 years too late, given the perception of the club under Don

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LEICESTER CITY
v
EVERTON
Today, 3.0

is with Australia for the football Confederations' Cup.

Bolton Wanderers hope that Fish, a confident defender, will be released by South Africa from the same competition. Fitness doubts surround four players while Thompson, a target for Leeds over the summer, and Holdsworth are suspended. Cox, though, is available after an absence of four months.

LEEDS UNITED (probable): 4-4-2: N. Ashton — G. McAllister, R. Heaton, D. Robertson — G. Kelly, A. Hartigan, D. Hobson, B. Roberts — D. Hare, G. Higginbotham.

BOLTON WANDERERS (probable): 4-4-2: K. Erasmus — N. Cox, M. Felt, A. Todd, M. Watson — J. Pollock, P. Franks, M. Jarman, S. Sellers — P. Barlow, N. Ebdon.

Referee: A. Wilkes

■ **TELEVISION:** Today, Match of the Day, brief highlights.

■ **PREDICTION:** Leeds to win a full-blooded game

LEICESTER CITY
v
EVERTON
Today, 3.0

Brian Glanville
Everton are in free fall and, with Duncan Ferguson and Slaven Bilic still suspended, it seems unlikely that their slide will be arrested. Mitch Ward, recently signed from Sheffield United, is also injured. At Chester, Ward made two fine chances for Ferguson that nearly brought goals, then carelessly gave away the penalty which changed the game.

That is how things are with Everton, who now seem likely to sell one of their best midfield players, Gary Speed, the Wales international, so they can buy new players. Bad news for them is that Emile Heskey, of Leicester

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FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Winter break would benefit supporters as much as players

I have a feeling that English football will soon be embracing a winter break — very soon, in fact. It is long overdue and there seems to be the right mood now to force it through.

It is a good idea. For many years, chairman, managers and players have said that it would benefit football and almost every season they are proved right. There are difficulties, mostly over the timing, but, in principle, it has to be a good idea.

I know that we could have a break over, say, Christmas, and the weather could be awful at the end of January, but that is not the point. Invariably, over winter, we have bad spells of weather and many clubs face a backlog of matches towards the end of the season. If we were to have a winter break, then the season would be extended automatically to accom-

modate the fixtures and there is a good chance that we would miss the worst of the weather in the process.

No one likes playing or watching matches in terrible conditions.

The Newcastle United v Derby

County game in midweek was, I understand, ruined by the conditions

and many of the Derby

supporters either didn't make

the match, because of the terrible

conditions on the roads, or did not

even dare set off. Undersil heating

makes pitches playable even in

the worst conditions, but it does

not guarantee the safety of the

supporters travelling to the match

or when they get there.

There is also the subject of

Christmas. Having no Christmas

break is part of being a footballer.

We accept that. It has always been

away with the idea that we will be

out celebrating New Year's Eve

at the same time as our fans will be

at home with their families.

This year, we play on Boxing

Day and then on the Sunday, but

after that we have a break until

the new year. It is the first

time in my memory that we have

not been asked to play on New

Year's Day — but don't get carried

away with the idea that we will be

out celebrating New Year's Eve

at the same time as our fans will be

at home with their families.

I am not going to be Santa this

year because I'm too skinny to be

asked to play him at the club's

party for all the children tomorrow.

I'd fancy the job, but the lads

say that I'll have to scoff quite a bit

more Christmas pud. We'll have to

leave it to Neil Ruddock.

■ Spanish inquisition

It is supposed to be the season of

goodwill, but I have to confess to

becoming increasingly annoyed and

a little distressed at all the

rumours and stories circulating

about me supposedly going to

Barcelona. I have been constantly

asked about it this week, but what

can I possibly say? There is

absolutely no truth in it whatsoever,

so how can I react to something that just doesn't exist?

If I have to say anything, then it just gives

credence to nonsense.

There have even been suggestions

in the Spanish newspapers this week that I have signed some

sort of agreement with Barcelona

to join them at some time in the

future. Not only is that an outa-

geous untruth that my lawyer will

be responding to, but it is hurtful

to me, Liverpool and our

supporters.

I have had absolutely no contact

with Barcelona since the club told

me to go and speak to them last

August. So when people come up

to me and ask about it, I'm in

exactly the same boat as them — I

know nothing at all.

I've read the papers making all

these suggestions this week, but if

Liverpool have heard nothing at all

from Barcelona and I have heard

nothing either, then that is just

end of story — people seem to

forget that I am under contract and

I am determined to honour that

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At the sharp end: the preserved head of the Dowdeswell Pike, a 60lb giant that was discovered dead at Dowdeswell Reservoir, near Cheltenham, more than a century ago. It remains the biggest specimen ever found in England.

Chilling tales from the riverbank

An aura of fear surrounds the pike, our largest freshwater predator. Now, though, is the winter of contentment for the hardy anglers who target it. Brian Clarke explains



Preying on predators: the legendary Fred Buller, left; and, above, a six-pounder that suffered a gruesome fate after trying to swallow a pike of similar size

When I was 11 or 12, my pal Tony Richardson and I cycled the five or six miles from our homes near the Tees in Darlington, downstream towards the little village of Croft. Just outside the village, we stopped, laid our bikes in the hedge and walked over field to two ponds that we had been told about.

Hell's Kettles had a spooky reputation. For one thing, the water was glass-clear, an unnatural occurrence at a time when most northern waters were so thick with pollution that an angler's weight almost floated. For another, they were bottomless: they went halfway to Australia, everyone knew that. For another, they held pike.

Tony and I had never seen a pike before, but we knew all about them. They were as big as sharks. They lived on other fish... and ducks and geese and dogs and maybe small children. They had enormous teeth and cold, round eyes that followed you everywhere, even after the fish was dead. But we had never seen one or fished for one, which was why we were there.

We were halfway across the field when we saw a commotion on the bank and realised that it was an angler with a fish. A big fish. We dropped our bags and ran.

We found him kneeling awhart a medium-sized pike. The pike had a motorcycle gauntlet clamped in its jaws which, the man said, he had put on while he removed the hooks. The pike had closed its jaws and its teeth had gone clean through the leather, into the hand inside. Eventually, he had jerked his hand free.

All the time that he was talking, the man was holding his hand up, turning it this way and that. All the time that he was talking, we were looking on, wide-eyed. There were several long, fine cuts down the back of his hand. Blood was dripping into the grass.

It is a fair bet that thousands of the

anglers heading to the water over the holiday will have stories like that. Now that pike season is in full swing, they will be brought out and dusted off. Lean and mean, *Esox lucius*, Britain's biggest native freshwater predator, has a special place in the angler's psyche. It is the only freshwater fish which many an angler approaches with fear when he has it on hook and needs to unhook it.

If the fantasists have a target, it will be the Dowdeswell Pike, the biggest example known for certain to have existed in England. It was found in Dowdeswell Reservoir, near Cheltenham, in 1896 and weighed 60lb — ten or 12 times heavier than the average salmon on the fishmonger's slab.

Closer to earth, the target is 46lb 13oz.

This fish was one of a string of immense

pike that came from Llandegfield reservoir, near Pontypool, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was, like all big pike, a female. The previous record, a 45-pounder, had been taken from the same lake in 1989 by a captor famous for more than his angling. Gareth Edwards is just one of many famous sportsmen who fish fanatically as well.

Most pike anglers will be more realistic still. At least, they will if they have read their Buller. Fred Buller is the most famous living pike fisherman and by far pike fishing's most authoritative historian. He has tracked down, and documented every pike over 35lb known to have been caught on rod and line anywhere — and has travelled through Europe to North America, Russia and even China to find them. By 1979, when he

published his remarkable *The Domesday Book of Mammoth Pike*, he had found just 230 taken in the previous 250 years. He reckons that the figure may be little more than 300 today, even given the advances in knowledge and technique.

Over Christmas and new year, the average pike will simply be hoping to catch something. Serious anglers will have a strategy. For a start, they will choose where they go, concentrating, if they can, on the relatively small number of waters where monster pike can be found. These are places that offer a continuous supply of prey, easily acquired; and that are big enough to hid a particular fish from its only enemy, man.

Lakes that are stocked with trout for fly-

fishing produce plenty of big specimens. The lake in such lakes as Graham Water, in Huntingdonshire, Rutland Water, in Leicestershire, and Bow Beech, in Kent, lie beneath a conveyor-belt of rich food that is constantly topped up.

As at Llandegfield, there is a ready population of smaller pike for big pike to feed on — so much the better. There is nothing one pike likes better than another.

And there are numerous records of fish trying to take members of their own kind, even those close to their own weight. Some have been found dead in lake margins, their jaws gagged on the head of another pike that was too big to swallow. Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate and a keen angler himself, based one of several poems about pike on such an incident.

Serious pike anglers will be choosing

not only the place, but the weather. Big pike have been caught in every kind of weather but given the choice, most experts will opt for a warmish, windy day in a settled period. Settled weather means that the fish are not having to adapt to changes that can affect their appetites; experience suggests that they feed better in winter when the air temperature exceeds that of the water; and wind, perhaps by putting extra oxygen into the water in addition to dazzling the angler's tackle with dancing light, seems to induce fish to feed with less caution.

The methods used will mostly be time-honoured. Always, the bait will be a fish or something that suggests a fish. Live-baiting, though on the wane now, is the oldest method of all. Deadbaiting with freshwater fish must come a close second, because the pike is a scavenger as well as a hunter. Even the relatively "modern" vogue of fishing for pike with dead, aromatic sea fish has ancient roots. Dame Julian Berners, who wrote a *Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*, the first book on the sport to be printed in English, advised anglers to "take a codlyng hooke and take a fresshe herring..." as long ago as 1496.

Other methods will include spinning, either with metal lures that flash provocatively, or "plugs", which dive and wriggle to suggest a sick or injured fish. A few enthusiasts, more interested in the "how" of fishing than in the "what" of catching, will use trout tackle and "flies" — although the flies will be as big as parrots and they will be fished on steel traces.

And so over the holiday, while the rest of us huddle indoors, perhaps nursing hangovers, the nation's pike anglers will be out there, come what may. They will be crouched in the margins or hunched in drifting boats, waiting for a big fish to strike, which some will. The majority will exercise all caution — but it is a certainty that some will leave their blood in the grass.

RUGBY UNION FIXTURES

TONIGHT

Kot-off 20 Unicorns stated

International match

Italy v Ireland

In Edinburgh, 1.30

Heineken Cup semi-final

Bath : Fau

European Conference semi-finals

Agen v Newcastle (1.15)

Colomiers : Stade Français

Allied Dunbar Premiership

First division

Leicester v Harlequins (3.0)

Scarborough : Bath

Newcastle : 16.00

Northumbria : 16.00

Richmond : 16.00

Worcester : 16.00

Second division

Bedford v Moseley (3.0)

Blackheath v West Hartlepool (3.0)

Exeter v Fylde (3.0)

Orrrell v Waterloo (3.0)

Rotherham v London Scottish (3.0)

Watford v London Scottish (3.0)

P W D L F A Pg

Bedford 10 10 0 0 154 20

L. Scarff 11 11 8 0 200 176

W. Harpold 10 10 0 0 237 199

Colomiers 10 7 0 0 212 257

Orrrell 10 6 0 0 238 171

Mosley 10 6 0 0 236 163

TOMORROW

Heineken Cup semi-final

Toulouse v Brive (2.30)

Allied Dunbar Premiership

First division

Richmond v Northampton (2.30)

Scarborough v Southend

St Helens v Widnes

Worcester v Shrewsbury

RACING: FORMER HUNTER CHASER CAN BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL HANDLING IN ASCOT CHASE

Thornton to profit again on Cool Dawn

By CHRIS MCGRATH

RACING approaches the season of goodwill in a fine, old-fashioned spirit of acrimony and avarice. In strident tones, the militant moguls of Flat racing demand extra millions to sustain their investment; administrators fret and squabble over where to find them.

Happily, however, jump racing remains a sport first and an industry second. The word "investment" sits uncomfortably next to the bolder risks daily undertaken by man and beast in National Hunt racing — often for no greater reward than the sheer sporting thrill of it.

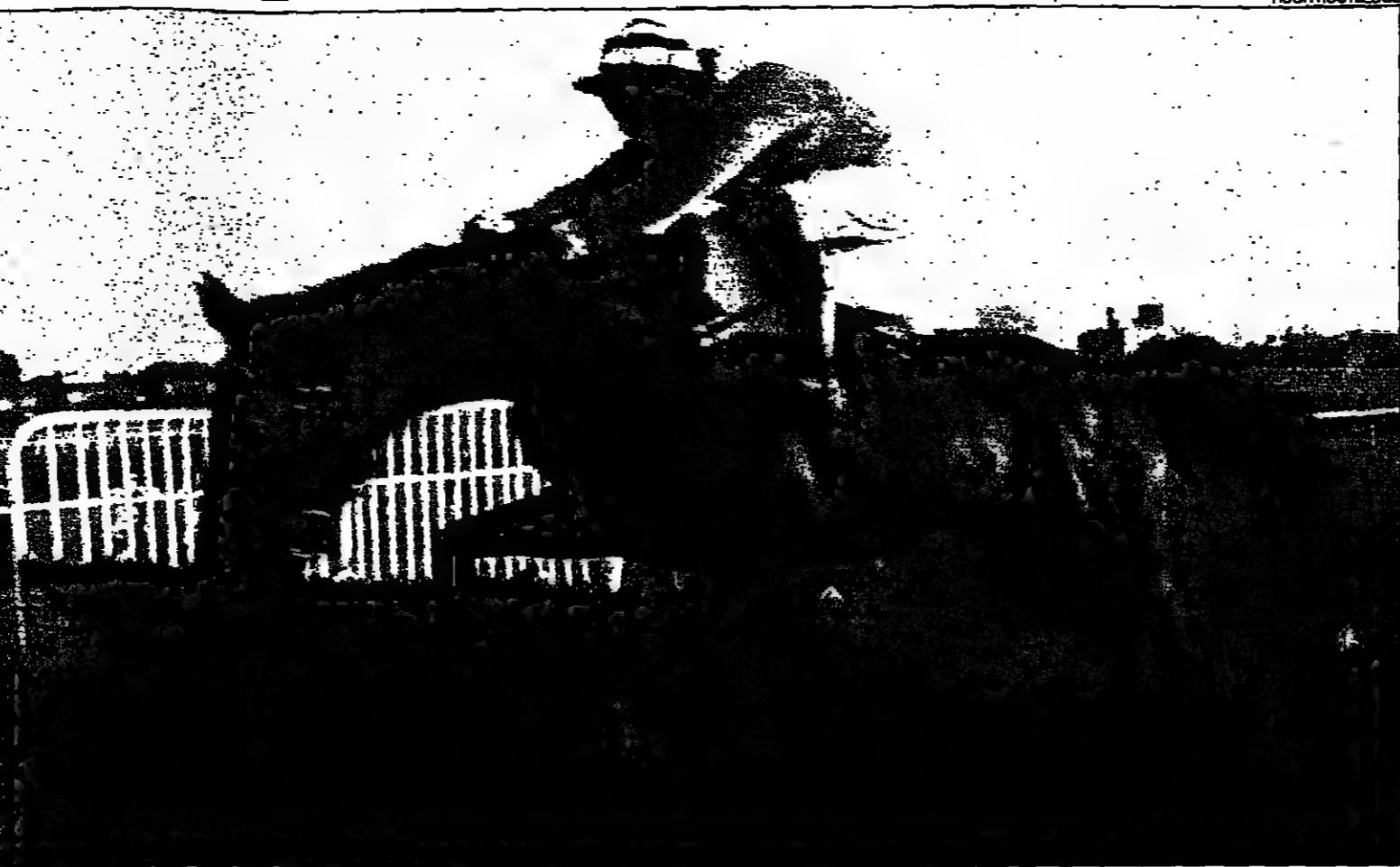
Nonetheless, there comes a



time when even the National Hunt fraternity considers sentiment too expensive. That threshold is crossed in the valuable Betware Cup at Ascot today, when a professional keeps the ride on Cool Dawn, who has been partnered for most of his career by his owner, Dido Harding.

There have been just two occasions when a jockey has been paid to take the reins on Cool Dawn — in the 1990 Irish National when he finished a fine third behind Feathered Gale and Jodani and over today's course and distance last month when Andrew Thornton made all to win a handicap in emphatic fashion.

Robert Alner, who trains Cool Dawn for Miss Harding,



John Dunlop's talented Wahiba Sands, who upset the odds-on Zaralaska at Leicester, has his second run over hurdles at Ascot today

reported that the gelding had sulked in behind when disappointing on his comeback at Wincanton previously. All the old joy and verve, however, were restored last time.

While he has undoubtedly been a bold jumper for his owner, who rode him into second in the 1996 Foxhunters' Chase at the Cheltenham Festival, Thornton might yet continue further progress. After all, offspring of Over The River do tend to improve with age.

It would be misleading to describe Cool Dawn as well treated strictly on the basis of

last month's win — having raced from out of the handicap

race retains an equivocal air.

Callsiee Bay, however, is in the form of his life, most recently catching the hesitant Challenger Du Luc at Newbury. The small field will suit but his stamina is unproven, while Harwell Lad was up to his old tricks at Cheltenham. That leaves Call It A Day, who has solid form in some top handicaps last term, well fresh and handles curbs with aplomb, as the biggest danger to Cool Dawn (2.20).

Three of the Smurfit Long Walk Hurdle field must shrug off a tough battle in the Bula Hurdle at Cheltenham. Pridwell confirmed his reformation with a career-best performance there, but may not be so effective over an extra mile in soft ground. Nor can one predict if he, Large Action and Blinsey have recovered from their strenuous efforts last week.

Paddy's Return may need his first run since June and prefers faster ground anyway, while Algan, winner of the King George VI Chase three years ago, will enjoy the mud but may not have the requisite zip for British hurdling. Go Informal is the runner with the fewest question marks, having resumed his progress with a typically gallant display at Newbury last month.

The Mite Group Kettle Gate Novices' Hurdle is competitive, though the form of Polydame has begun to look a bit porous, while Circus Star is learning fast, but further improvement may be required to beat Wahiba Sands (1.10), who burst Zaralaska's bubble at Leicester.

Robert Alner, who trains Cool Dawn for Miss Harding,

ASCOT	
THUNDERER	
12.35 Jefferies	2.20 Go Ballistic
1.10 Wahiba Sands	2.50 LECTARD (nap)
1.45 Go-Informal	3.20 L'Opera

Timekeeper's top rating: 2.20 GO BALLISTIC.

GONG: GOOD TO SOFT (SOFT IN PLACES) TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

12.35 BOOK OF MUSIC NOVICES CHASE

(Grade II £11,720; 2m 3f 11yds) (4 runners)

101 12-121 CHIEF'S SONG 14 (G,F,G,S) (P) A Dido H 7-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

102 1050-12 CRACK ON 14 (D,G,D,S) (P) Pogson 7-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

103 1050-12 GOLDFINGER 14 (D,G,D,S) (P) Pogson 7-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

104 1405-12 GRINDO 15 (D,G,D,S) (P) Hobbs 7-11-10 ... R Powell 148

BETTING: 6-4 Crack On, 11-4 Goldfinger, 11-4 Chief's Song, 8-1 Jeffries

1996: SIMPLY DASHING 5-11-7 Denby 15-4 (1st) & Easterly 8-11

1997: CHIEF'S SONG 15-4 (1st) & Easterly 8-11

FORM FOCUS: Crack On (11-2) leads to 7 in Direct Route in grade II novice chase at Sandown (2m, good), previously 8-13 3rd to Spendid in handicap hurdle at Newbury (2m, good), 8-13 3rd to Lord McAlister, 8-13 3rd to Zaralaska in novice chase at Hereford (3m, good), previously 11-2 3rd to Chief's Song (10) while in novice chase at Ascot (3m, good, 10-2 2nd)

GROUND NUT is weighted to reverse form with Chief's Song

1.10 MITIE GROUP KETTLE GATE NOVICES HURDLE

(Grade II £8,918; 2m 11yds) (9 runners)

201 2233-11 CRISTIE STAR 20 (G,D) (Bogmire) D Fletcher 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

202 1051 BALWELL LAD 14 (D,G,D,S) (P) Hobbs 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

203 348-33 POLYDAME 21 (D,S) (M) Ballynoe 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

204 1050-12 FUNNY GENE 18 (G,F,G,S) (P) Taylor 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

205 511-12 CLOTHESLINE 18 (D,G,D,S) (P) Hobbs 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

206 1050-12 PERFECT NEMO 14 (F) (The Man Parrot) H Fletcher 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

207 3 BOLTON 28 (F) (G) (L) (G) 8-11-10 ... L'Aspell 117

208 1050-12 SPARKY 15 (D,S) (P) Hobbs 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

209 1 WAHIBA SANDS 15 (D-S) (L) (G) (L) (G) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

BETTING: 8-4 Wahiba Sands, 1-1 Sparky, 1-1 Bolton, 1-1 Polydame, 1-1 Perfect Nemo, 1-1 Sparky, 1-1 Funny Gene

FORM FOCUS: Circle Star beat Marlon 14 in 7-runner grade II novice handicap hurdle at Cheltenham (2m 11yds, good) with Polydame 3rd, 8-13 3rd to Balwells Lad, 8-13 3rd to Spendid in handicap hurdle at Newbury (2m 11yds, good), previously 8-13 3rd to Zaralaska in novice chase at Hereford (3m, good, 10-2 2nd)

POLYDAMES finally good at Ascot (3m, good)

1.25 MIRROR JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE

(Grade II £3,080; 2m 4f) (14 runners)

1 201 BRAVE ENEMY 15 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... P Hobbs 148

2 COBLE 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... J Jones 148

3 HEART FULL OF SOUL 16 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... P Hobbs 148

4 1050-12 MARLOWE 16 (D,S) (P) Hobbs 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

5 1050-12 MELBOURNE 16 (D,S) (P) Hobbs 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

6 1050-12 SOUTHERLY WIND 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... P Hobbs 148

7 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

8 1050-12 VARIOUS 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

9 1050-12 BULLDOGS 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

10 1050-12 MELBOURNE 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

11 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

12 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

13 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

14 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

15 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

16 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

17 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

18 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

19 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

20 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

21 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

22 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

23 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

24 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

25 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

26 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

27 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

28 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

29 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

30 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

31 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

32 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

33 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

34 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

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36 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

37 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

38 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

39 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

40 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

41 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

42 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

43 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

44 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

45 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

46 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

47 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

48 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

49 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

50 1050-12 SPARKY 17 (F) (H) 8-11-10 ... A P McCoy 148

If Praise
extend
g sequence

One woman is about to challenge the idea that a British team for elite equestrian events should be for men only

Lampard is ready to leap over final fence

If I ever write an autobiography of my competitive career (a highly unlikely eventuality), I shall call it *Beaten by Schoolgirls*. That should ensure a bidding war among the tabloids and, besides, it would reflect one essential truth of horse life.

Anyone who competes at local show level must learn to love a beating at the hands of a schoolgirl.

It happens time and again: your blazing jump-off time is beaten out of sight by some 16-year-old girl riding a 14.3 that can stop and turn on a sixpence; she, of course, has never seen a sixpence.

If you like the horsey life, at a non-professional level, then it helps to like women. You spend much of your time surrounded by them: *arbes de jeans filles en jodhpurs*. Me, I always say I like horses because I haven't discovered boys yet.

But in all the horse disciplines, the closer you get to elite sport, the fewer women you find. And this is true even in showjumping: an area of sport famous for its galleries of female winners. Today at Olympia, the top class of the week-long show has a start list of 20 and only two riders are women.

One of these is Veronique Whisker, the estranged wife of Michael; the other is Di Lampard. I did not suggest to Lampard that this imbalance had come about because boys can ride better than

girls. "Olympic potential," she said of her top horse, Abbeville Dream. And that means the partnership—not the horse on its own.

It is a strange thing, this male take-over of a sport that, at the bottom of the pyramid, is almost exclusively female. It is as if males had taken over synchronised swimming—but only at the Olympic Games. The lack of elite female

riders was one of the matters addressed by the working party, which was gathered together by the British Show Jumping Association to look at the sport's failings: its virtues and its future.

The report will be published in the new year, but I know what it will say because I was a member of the working party. We agreed that one of the sport's attractions was the equal terms business: men against women, head to head and may the best human or equine win.

The sport suffers from Golden Age: but at least the Golden Age of showjumping existed.

Showjumping really was prime-time television, showjumpers were regularly voted Sports Personality of the Year, and the nation conjured with such names as Marion Coates, Pat Smythe and Amelie Drummond-Hay.

Since those days, women have made grounds in just about every area of sport. There is even a serious likelihood of women being



Lampard at the Olympia stables with Equity, left, and Abbeville Dream, the horse with wings on its heels. If it trains on, and stays sound, the partnership should pay dividends

permitted to join MCC in the new year, a last bastion if ever there was one. On their home ground of showjumping, though, women have been squeezed out. In showjumping, time has run backwards. Women have moved from winners to second-class citizens.

Lampard has no doubt about the principal reason for this. Ronnie Maserella, the Great Britain team manager, has said, simply enough, that women are not as good as men and that, given equal rivals for the same place on the team, he will always choose the male and drop the female.

Lampard, surprisingly, likes Maserella. She also, unsurprisingly, profoundly disagrees with him. "He brought this about and I'd say that if he was sitting here," she insisted. No doubt she has done, and will again, but the real task is to make herself and Abbeville Dream undropable. She is on the right track: nothing in

horsey life is better than an improving horse: a horse of huge potential who you have not begun to reach the bottom of.

But the glass ceiling of showjumping is more than one man's whim. The sport's fall from the Golden Age has hit women harder than it has men. There are very few top-level shows in this country. To seek big events and elite competition, a rider must travel to the Continent—and do so again and again.

It is a hard, dispiriting, relentless business and it can be very expensive of private and family life. A top showjumper spends as much time on the road as a minibus driver. It is a hard life, even though it is one full of horses and lit with sudden shafts of glory.

Lampard has a son, Henry, aged six, and that gives her and her partner a delicate juggling act. Lampard is an individual with plenty of ability to focus, but she

also requires the ability to be, as it were, an intermittent monomaniac. She has no wish to run a family at long range.

It works, it is working, there is no doubt of that. For, at 40, she has not only the new-kid-on-the-block fire of that exciting decade, but also the horse to take her where she wants to be. That is always the great thing for anyone involved in the professional horse sports.

It is a hard, dispiriting, relentless business and it can be very expensive of private and family life. A top showjumper spends as much time on the road as a minibus driver. It is a hard life, even though it is one full of horses and lit with sudden shafts of glory.

Lampard is not about to whinge about that particular problem, because as far as she, at least, is concerned, it has solved itself: enthusiastic owners, one of whom had a dream of the horse's future success. And with the owners came

a horse with wings on his heels.

A strange animal, too, as I visited him in his box. Not hostile, not shovingly friendly, not jumpy and alarmed. There was something of the cat about him: the same self-contained diffidence. He allowed himself to be patted, since the approach was made with tact and circumspection. Give very little of himself, cat-like.

Pick the pocket of a horse-person and you end up with no money but plenty of extra-strong mints. Abbeville Dream ate my mint without going overboard with gratitude or greed. This is a horse with a singular nature.

Once you have the horse, you are no longer playing with a stacked deck. A horse, a horse, it is the cry of everybody in the horse sports. Every apprentice jockey knows that if he had a horse fast enough, he would win the Derby. It is one of the oldest jokes in racing, the jockey criticised for losing a race,

apologising: "I couldn't go without the horse, my lord." The crucial skill of the aspiring jockey and trainer as not so much riding and training good horses, as getting hold of good horses in the first place. Once you are established as a good trainer, the good horses come to you as of right.

But Lampard has got her horse, and if he continues to train on, and—the biggest if of all in the horsey life—if he stays sound, there is a good deal more to be seen from the partnership. She is not doing it for the cause, of course. Professional athletes are not in the business of doing things for causes. She is not even doing it for the laudable aim of stuffing it up Maserella, though that would be a passing pleasure.

She is doing it for the same reason as everybody else in the ring today: for the pursuit of victory. Doing it for herself. And for the horse, of course.

SIMON BARNES

Talking horse



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area of sport. There is even a

serious likelihood of women being

Imperial Call faces more hurdles on way to Cheltenham

By CHRIS MCGRATH

IMPERIAL CALL, the 1996 Gold Cup winner, continues his tortuous journey back to the top of the chasing ladder with an outing over hurdles at Navan today. Having missed a few days' work after his comeback against Dorans Pride at Cheltenham last month, Imperial Call is thought to need this unconventional preparation for a rematch in the Ericsson Chase at Leopoldstown's Christmas meeting.

Fergie Sutherland endured a frustrating time with Imperial Call last season, the gelding eventually being pulled up when defending his crown at Cheltenham. But he showed much of his old dash at Clonmel, albeit in a race that turned into a sprint over the last two fences — at precisely which stage he blew up.

It will probably be no easier to interpret today's performance. He will, naturally, do well to handle the smaller obstacles half as well as his 15 specialists opponents — notably Cockney Lad, outpaced by Istabraq at Fairyhouse last time, but expected to confirm previous course and distance form with Tattershall.

Rough Quest, runner-up to Imperial Call at Cheltenham before his brilliant win in the Martell Grand National, has likewise had his problems since. Yesterday, however, Terry Casey declared him

THUNDERER

12.20 General Pongo, 12.25 Now We Know, 1.30 Bold Gait, 2.00 Harry Cone, 2.30 Beggar's Banquet, 3.00 Lake Kariba, 3.30 Summyne Special.

GONG: GOOD TO SOFT (SOFT IN PLACES)

12.20 LEPLEYS HOG ROAST HANDICAP CHASE (4,182 3m) (4 runners)

1-82 RECTOR'S GARDEN 23 (6f C,D,B) T Foster 9-11,7 Colley 9-12,7 2-83 GENERAL PONGO 23 (6f G,L) T George 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7 3-84 SUMMYNE SPECIAL 23 (6f C,D,B) Mr J Morris 9-14,7 ... R Colley 9-14,7 4-114 SHEELIN LAD 284 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

5-104 ORIENTAL SATE 3-1 Rostey Girdle, 3-1 General Pongo, 5-1 Shandie.

6-121 SUMMYNE SPECIAL 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

7-104 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

8-105 ROYALIST 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs J Morris 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

9-106 TIGER HUNTER 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

10-107 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

11-108 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

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47-144 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

48-145 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

49-146 VERSITY 23 (6f C,D,B) Mrs T McLean 9-14,7 ... R Thompson 9-14,7

50-147 VERSITY 2

Enter the league and win £10,000

Do you have the skill to choose a team and win the FA Cup league?

A £10,000 prize is up for grabs for the winner of the brand-new FA Cup league, a league within the ITF.

Entrants to ITF will automatically score points in the FA Cup league when the players in their team compete in the FA/Tennents Cup rounds. From January 3, English Premiership players will begin the knockout and January 24 sees the start of the Tennents Cup round involving Scottish premier division teams.

This is your chance to choose a team specifically for the FA Cup league. All players start scoring when the cup rounds involving English and Scottish premier divisions begin. All teams will be allocated transfers to use at their own discretion but remember, the sooner you enter the more transfers your team will be allocated.

Any team in the ITF before 12 noon last Saturday received 20 extra transfers in addition

to their present allocation. From now on, all new teams will receive 20 transfers for the duration of the season. Postal entries must be received by Tuesday December 30 and telephone entries by 10am on Saturday January 3 in order to score points from the beginning of the FA Cup league competition. Entrants must be 18 years or over.

By competing in the FA Cup league, your players will automatically score points for matches played in the English and Scottish premier divisions during the 1997-98 football season as well and, if appropriate, in the mini leagues — students' or women's.

By scoring points in the ITF, your team could win the monthly prizes of £1,000, a signed Mitre football, a Mitre sports bag and a pair of tickets to a premier league match by scoring the most points in any one month. The mini league (student's and women's) also carry monthly prizes.

Once you have selected your team, simply complete the entry form and seal it with a cheque or postal order for £2 payable to ITF. Postage to the address on the application form. Entries from outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are £3.00 sterling and may only be sent by post.

Your team must be made up of 12 individuals at any one time but you may transfer your players in and out of your team as you wish according to your transfer allocation.

You may enter as many teams as you wish.

HOW TO ENTER BY POST

Once you have selected your team, simply complete the entry form and seal it with a cheque or postal order for £2 payable to ITF. Postage to the address on the application form. Entries from outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are £3.00 sterling and may only be sent by post.

HOW TO ENTER BY TELEPHONE

0891 405 0411

(Republic of Ireland +44 990 100 308)

Once you have chosen your team, call the entrants hotline using a touch-tone (DTMF) telephone (most push-button telephones with a "0" and a "1" button are touch-tone) and follow the step-by-step instructions. You must speak (not speak) the full set of selections (using interactive digit-player codes) for each of your 12 club players and your manager. You can then ask whether you wish to transfer your players (men, women or students) to another team as directed on the application form. The game on your team (men, women or students), your name, address and telephone number.

Finally, you can add the details of the captain and manager. You must then make a payment of £2 per team to enter a new team, £1 per team to transfer a team and £1 per league to enter a mini league.

The ITF reserves the right to accept or decline applications.

To enter, call

0891 405 011

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HOW TO ENTER YOUR TEAM

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL ENTRANTS

First Name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Daytime Tel. _____

Cheque / PO No. _____

This year ITF incorporates separate mini leagues. Please tick the correct league(s) for your entry.

Women's League

Student League

Entrants must be 18 or over to play in the ITF league, the Women's league and the Students' league.

PREMIERSHIP CLUBS IN FA CUP DRAW	
Barnsley v Aston Villa	
Arsenal v Port Vale	
Leicester City v Northampton Town	
Louis United v Oxford United	
Everton v Newcastle United	
Liverpool v Coventry City	
West Ham United v Bolton	
Derby County v Southampton	
Tottenham Hotspur v Fulham	
Crystal Palace v Scunthorpe United	
Wetford v Sheffield Wednesday	
Chelsea v Manchester United	
Wimbledon v Wrexham	
Blackburn Rovers v Wigan Athletic	
Barnsley v Bolton Wanderers	
Ties to be played on January 3 and 4	

ITF Terms and conditions: 1. You must enter through the mode of entry you wish to play by 2. Entrants must enter through the mode of entry they wish to play by 3. Entrants must enter through the mode of entry they wish to play by 4. Responsibility is accepted for up to 100 entries due to circumstances beyond our control. Indemnities, invalids or incomplete entries are not held and will not be returned. The company is not responsible for damage to equipment caused by ITF. 5. The ITF is not responsible for damage to equipment caused by ITF. 6. Telephone entries and transfers are made by Touch-tone (DTMF) telephones (most push-button telephones with a "0" and a "1" button are touch-tone). 7. The ITF is not responsible for damage to equipment caused by ITF. 8. Players' roles will be reassessed at the end of January and March. 9. Official updated players' managers' lists will be available on the ITF website. 10. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 11. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 12. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 13. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 14. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 15. The ITF reserves the right to withdraw any team from the competition if it is felt that the team is not representative of the ITF. 16. The competition is open to employees of News International. 17. If a player or manager moves during the competition, it may affect the competition. 18. 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Court of Appeal

Power to order interim payment

Securities and Investments Board v Scandex Capital Management A/S and Another

Before Lord Justice Hobhouse, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Ottoway [Judgment December 16]

The court had jurisdiction under section 6(2) of the Financial Services Act 1986 to order that an interim payment by court be made by a person found to have been knowingly concerned in carrying on unauthorised investment business in the United Kingdom in contravention of section 3.

The question whether a provision of a foreign law has the effect of entitling a person to carry on investment business in the UK was a matter of English law not foreign law and would depend on the construction of section 31 of the 1986 Act and the relevant regulations.

The Court of Appeal so stated allowing an appeal by the plaintiff, the Securities and Investments Board, now called the Financial Services Authority, from the refusal of Mr Justice Carnwath on July 3, 1997 of the plaintiff's application that the second defendant, Jeremy Bartholomew-White, pay immediately the sum of £627,522 into court on account of the liability pursuant to section 62 of the 1986 Act.

The court also dismissed a cross-appeal by Mr Bartholomew-White from the decision of the judge that he had been knowingly concerned in the contravention of section 3 by the first defendant, Scandex Capital Management A/S.

Scandex was incorporated under Danish law on September 1, 1995. The second defendant was a shareholder of Scandex and its managing director.

Mr Alan Steinfield, QC and Mr Christopher Harrison for the SIB; Mr Peter Griffin for Mr Bartholomew-White.

LORD JUSTICE MILLETT said that section 3 of the 1986 Act provided that no person should carry on an investment business in the UK unless he was an authorised person under chapter III or an exempted person under chapter IV of the Act.

The defendant did not contend

Motive for threatened publication irrelevant

Holley and Others v Smyth. Before Lord Justice Stagnon, Lord Justice Auld and Sir Christopher Slade [Judgment December 4]

A defendant's motive in seeking to publish material claimed by the plaintiff to be defamatory was irrelevant in determining whether the threatened publication ought to be restrained.

Where, therefore, a defendant threatened to publish material unless the plaintiff paid him to remain silent, the plaintiff was not entitled to an interlocutory injunction to restrain the publication unless the material was manifestly untrue in accordance with the rule in *Bonnard v Perrymen* [1891] 2 Ch 269. His remedy was to sue in defamation after publication.

The Court of Appeal so held by a majority, Lord Justice Stagnon dissenting, allowing the appeal of the defendant, Duncan John Smyth, and discharging an injunction.

Infecting dose date

Creditfield Jakob Disease Litigation and Newman and Others v Medical Research Council and Another

Following the judgment of Mr Justice Morland on December 19, 1996 that those cases of Creditfield Jakob Disease among recipients of human growth hormone who received their treatment after July 1, 1977 were caused by the negligence of the Department of Health or the Medical Research Council, so that those claims from plaintiffs whose treatment had ended before that date failed and that claims by those whose treatment began after that date succeeded, those patients

whose treatment straddled July 1, 1977 were entitled on appeal to adduce evidence as to whether or not they would have continued to be treated with the hormone after that date and whether or not the infecting dose had been received before or after that date.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Chadwick) so stated on November 18 in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by Eric and Maureen Newman on behalf of the estate of Terence Newman and others against the order of Mr Justice Morland on December 19, 1996 and remitting the case for further directions.

Scots Law Report December 20 1997 House of Lords

Proprietors did not create lease

Clydesdale Bank plc v Davids and Others and Same v Same (Consolidated appeal)

Lord Goff of Chieveley, Lord Jauncey of Tullichettle, Lord Lloyd of Berwick, Lord Hope of Craighead and Lord Clyde [Speeches December 16]

Proprietary heritable proprietors could not validly create a lease over the property in favour of one of their numbers.

The House of Lords dismissed two appeals by Alexander George Davidson from the Second Division of the Inner House of the Court of Session (Lord Ross, Lord Justice-Clerk, Lord McClelland and Lord Morton) [1996 SLT 437] who on November 24, 1995 by a majority (Lord McClelland dissenting) had refused appeals by Mr Davidson from Peterhead Sheriff Court.

The sheriff (K. A. McLernan) had granted decree in favour of the pursuers, Clydesdale Bank plc, in two actions raised by them against the defendants, Mr Davidson and others, and the sheriff principal (D. J. Risk, QC) had refused appeals by Mr Davidson and two other defendants.

Mr D. A. Y. Menzies and Mr R. E. Aird for Mr Davidson; Mr W. C. Gibraith, QC and Mr S. A. Bennett for the bank.

LORD CLYDE said that on January 11, 1997 Mr Davidson and his parents had executed a deed described as a "volume of lease" between the three of them, referred to as "the landlords" and Mr Davidson, referred to as "the tenant". It narrated that Mr

Davison had occupied the farms and lands to which it related for a number of years as tenant of the landlords and then purported to let them to him for three years at a rent of £4,000 a year.

The lands had formerly been owned by a partnership consisting of Mr Davidson and his parents. Their ownership had been extinguished in 1968 and the lands thereafter conveyed to Mr Davidson and his parents as proprieitary proprietors in the proportions of one-half to Mr Davidson and one-quarter each to his parents.

On February 24, 1977 and in 1985 Mr Davidson and his parents had granted standard securities over the lands in favour of the bank in security of sums due to the bank by virtue of bonds granted by Mr Davidson.

In 1988 the bank had served calling-up notices on Mr Davidson in respect of the securities. He had failed to make full payment and had accordingly been in default under the standard conditions applicable. His estates had been sequestrated and a permanent trustee appointed.

The bank had raised two actions each claiming declaration of its right to enter into possession of the lands and an order requiring Mr Davidson and others to remove from them. In his defence, Mr Davidson had maintained that he was entitled to continue to occupy the lands as an agricultural tenant under the minute of lease.

The question was whether a valid lease of lands could be constituted by co-proprietors in favour of one of their numbers. Differing views had been ex-

pressed in the textbooks and authorities.

It was well established that no person might enter into a contract with himself. There was, however, no objection in law to the making of a contract between co-proprietors regarding the use or management of the common property on any terms they chose, including arranging for one of them to have the sole occupation of it, but it was a distinct question whether such agreement could constitute a lease.

The rights of each co-proprietor extended over the whole of the lands. In light of this basic characteristic, it did not seem to his Lordship that any or all of the co-proprietors could validly create a lease for one of them to have the sole occupation of it, but it was a distinct question whether such agreement could constitute a lease.

His right to occupy had been attributed not to any grant by his parents but to his own right as co-proprietor. What had been described as a rent had been truly a compensation for the surrender of his parents' rights to share in the use of the lands.

What had been achieved by the consent of the three co-proprietors was that Mr Davidson had obtained as an act of management and administration the sole possession of the lands, but that had not secured for him a real right as tenant nor had it created a valid lease.

Lord Goff and Lord Lloyd agreed with Lord Clyde. Lord Jauncey delivered an opinion concerning Lord Hope and Lord Clyde; Lord Hope delivered an opinion concurring with Lord Clyde.

Solicitors: Lawford & Co, Richmond for Standard Remuneration, WS, Edinburgh; A. C. Morrison & Richards, Aberdeen; Lyons for Alex Morrison & Co, WS, Edinburgh; for Wilsons & Dallas, Aberdeen.

Law Report December 20 1997

Court of Appeal

Seeking disclosure of foreign documents

that Scandex was an exempted person. The question at issue was concerned with the effect of his alleged belief that it was an authorised person.

Section 6(2) gave the court power, if satisfied that a person had entered into any transaction in contravention of section 3, to order that person and any person who appeared to the court to have been knowingly concerned in the contravention, to take such steps as the court might direct for restoring the parties to the position in which they were before the transaction was entered into.

There were several indications in section 31 itself that the word "authorised" in section 31(1)(c) means being in possession of a specific authorisation granted by the appropriate supervisory body.

Denmark was a member state within the meaning of section 31. Prior to January 1996 it was lawful under Danish law for any person to carry on investment business in the UK without the necessary authority under the 1986 Act. That would be a mistake of English law.

Whether a provision of a foreign law had the effect of entitling a person to carry on business in the UK was a matter of English law. If the defendant thought that he was authorised to carry on investment business in Denmark without authorisation but that did not make him an "authorised person" within the meaning of the 1986 Act.

On December 26, 1995 Scandex applied to Finance, the Danish regulatory authority, for authorisation to carry on investment business in Denmark. That enabled it to take advantage of the transitional provisions under Danish law which entitled it to continue investment business after January 1, 1996 without authorisation pending the determination of its application.

In the meantime, it was not a European investment firm or a quasi-European investment firm within the meaning of the 1986 Regulations. Nor merely by making its application for authorisation did Scandex become an "authorised person" within the meaning of section 31 of the 1986 Act.

The defendant submitted that while ignorant of English law was no excuse for ignorance of Danish law. He had argued that he was advised, on advice from Danish lawyers, that Scandex was authorised under transitional regulations to conduct investment business throughout the European Union. If that was a mistake, he submitted, it was a mistake of Danish law, and therefore to be treated as a mistake of fact.

The difficulty with that argument was that the defendant was at all times fully aware of the position under Danish law. The question was whether an order for interim payment into court was in the case of a European investment firm but subject such a firm to regulation, which prohibited it from carrying on investment business in the UK unless the requirements of paragraph 1 of Schedule 3 to the 1986 Act had been complied with.

That had the effect of imposing further requirements not found in section 31 of the 1986 Act before it was lawful to carry on business in the UK or consult Danish lawyers.

Section 31(1)(c) did not provide any specific exception for European investment firms. The defendant submitted that while ignorant of English law was no excuse for ignorance of Danish law was no excuse for ignorance of English law. He had argued that he was advised, on advice from Danish lawyers, that Scandex was authorised under transitional regulations to conduct investment business throughout the European Union. If that was a mistake, he submitted, it was a mistake of Danish law, and therefore to be treated as a mistake of fact.

Did section 6(2) authorise the court to order an interim payment into court? His Lordship did not

see why not. In *Pantell* Lord Justice Scott was not authorised by the relevant regulatory body to carry on such business in Denmark, but was entitled to carry it on without authorisation for the time being. Being authorised and not needing to be authorised were two different things.

It did not matter if the defendant thought that there was a difference between these two concepts in Danish law. If he made any mistake at all, it was that he believed that, under English law, the fact that he had carried on investment business in Denmark without authorisation was a mistake of English law.

To correct the defendant's mistake impression it would be unnecessary to consider Danish law or consult Danish lawyers. It was enough to consider section 31 of the 1986 Act and the 1986 Regulations.

The defendant had no arguable defence to a charge that he was "knowingly concerned" in the contravention in question. His Lordship would dismiss his cross-appeal.

Before their Lordships, the plaintiff invoked section 6(2) of the 1986 Act, which authorised the court, if satisfied that a person had been knowingly concerned in a contravention of section 3 to take such steps as for restoring the parties to the position in which they were before the transaction was entered into.

The question was whether an order for interim payment into court was such a step. Section 6(2) was considered in *Securicor and Investment Board v Pantell* SA [No. 2] [1993] Ch 254 where the principal judgment was given by Lord Justice Scott.

Did section 6(2) authorise the court to order an interim payment into court? His Lordship did not

Re Mid-East Trading Ltd (No 2)

Before Lord Justice Peter Gibson, Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Chadwick [Judgment December 9]

The principle that save in exceptional circumstances a foreigner not party to a contract should not be required to produce documents outside the jurisdiction concerning business transacted outside the jurisdiction was applicable when considering whether or not to make an order for disclosure of documents under section 236 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

His Lordship saw no reason why the steps in question must be such as to effect immediate restoration in full. The powers conferred on the court were characterised by their extreme flexibility.

In his Lordship's judgment, they included power to direct the taking of steps which were preparatory to payment in investors, and it was clear that they were aimed towards the restoration of the parties to their former position under the directions of the court.

And if such an order could be made after final judgment when necessary accounts and inquiries had been completed, then an order for interim payment could be made after interlocutory judgments and before the accounts and inquiries had been taken.

The only limitation was that all such orders must be by reference to particular transactions, but so long as that was the case then every payment into court with a view to its later distribution to the parties out of court or to a suitable person, who could be an officer of the plaintiff, appointed as receiver, so that a pro rata distribution could be made to investors under the directions of the court.

Before their Lordships, the plaintiff invoked section 6(2) of the 1986 Act, which authorised the court to make an order for interim payment when necessary accounts and inquiries had been completed, then an order for interim payment could be made after interlocutory judgments and before the accounts and inquiries had been taken.

The only limitation was that all such orders must be by reference to particular transactions, but so long as that was the case then every payment into court with a view to its later distribution to the parties out of court or to a suitable person, who could be an officer of the plaintiff, appointed as receiver, so that a pro rata distribution could be made to investors under the directions of the court.

He accepted that giving the judgment of the court, said that the appellants accepted that there had been dealings between Mid-East and Lehman companies in New York and that those had been generated in New York.

It was submitted that to make an order for the production of those documents would infringe the principle identified in *Mackinnon v Donaldson* [1986] Ch 482, 493C, Mr Justice Evans-Lombe accepted that the principle was applicable to a decision whether or not to make an order under section 236 of the 1986 Act.

He accepted also that the business of the Lehman companies, although not that of a bank, was sufficiently similar to require a recognition that duties of confidence to customers would arise. But he took the view that application of the principle did not lead to the conclusion that no order should be made.

The liquidators challenged the premise that the *Mackinnon* principle had any direct application to a decision whether or not to make an order for the production of those documents.

an order under section 236 of the 1986 Act, it was said, correctly, that in the *Mackinnon* case, the order was sought in the context of inter partes litigation.

In that case the court was asked to make or confirm orders which would touch a person against whom the relevant claim was in its own administration of justice in pending proceedings between other parties by producing documents which could be used in evidence in those proceedings.

The exercise of the court's jurisdiction in that context was plainly an assertion of sovereignty. The court, as an organ of the state, had to be careful not to assert or exercise sovereignty where that could trespass upon the sovereignty of another state.

However, in so far as the making of an order under section 236 in respect of documents abroad involved an assertion of sovereignty then that was an assertion which the legislature must be taken to have intended the courts to make in appropriate cases.

By contrast, it was said, the making of an order under section 236 of documents which were not in the jurisdiction did not involve an exercise in sovereignty; alternatively, that it was an assertion of sovereignty which the legislature must be taken to have intended the courts to make in appropriate cases.

If that was the correct view, then it was not for the court to erect the additional hurdle of "exceptional circumstances".

The power to make an order under section 236 was to be exercised in accordance with the principles explained by the House of Lords in *British and Commonwealth*.

wealth Holdings plc v Spicer and Oppenheim [1993] AC 420.

The applicant had to satisfy the court that after balancing all the factors, there was a proper case for such an order to be made. A proper case was one where the liquidator in its own administration of justice in pending proceedings between other parties by producing documents which could be used in evidence in those proceedings.

In applying that test and, in particular, in considering what burden would be imposed on a bank required to disclose details of another customer's affairs, the court would of course give weight to any risk that compliance with the order would or might expose the bank to claims for breach of confidence or to criminal penalties.

Where that was a real risk it seemed to their Lordships likely that the *Compagnie* Court would be slow to order production, at least if there was some other route by which the documents could be obtained by afforded protection to the bank.

But that was because the risk that the bank would be exposed to liability was a factor to be weighed with others and not because there was some special hurdle of "exceptional circumstances" to be overcome by the applicant.

Mr Justice Evans-Lombe was satisfied that there was no real risk that the Lehman companies would be exposed to liability if required to comply with an order to produce documents which were in New York.

Solicitors: Freshfields; Lowell White Durrant.

Construing term of lease

Brown v Gloucester City Council

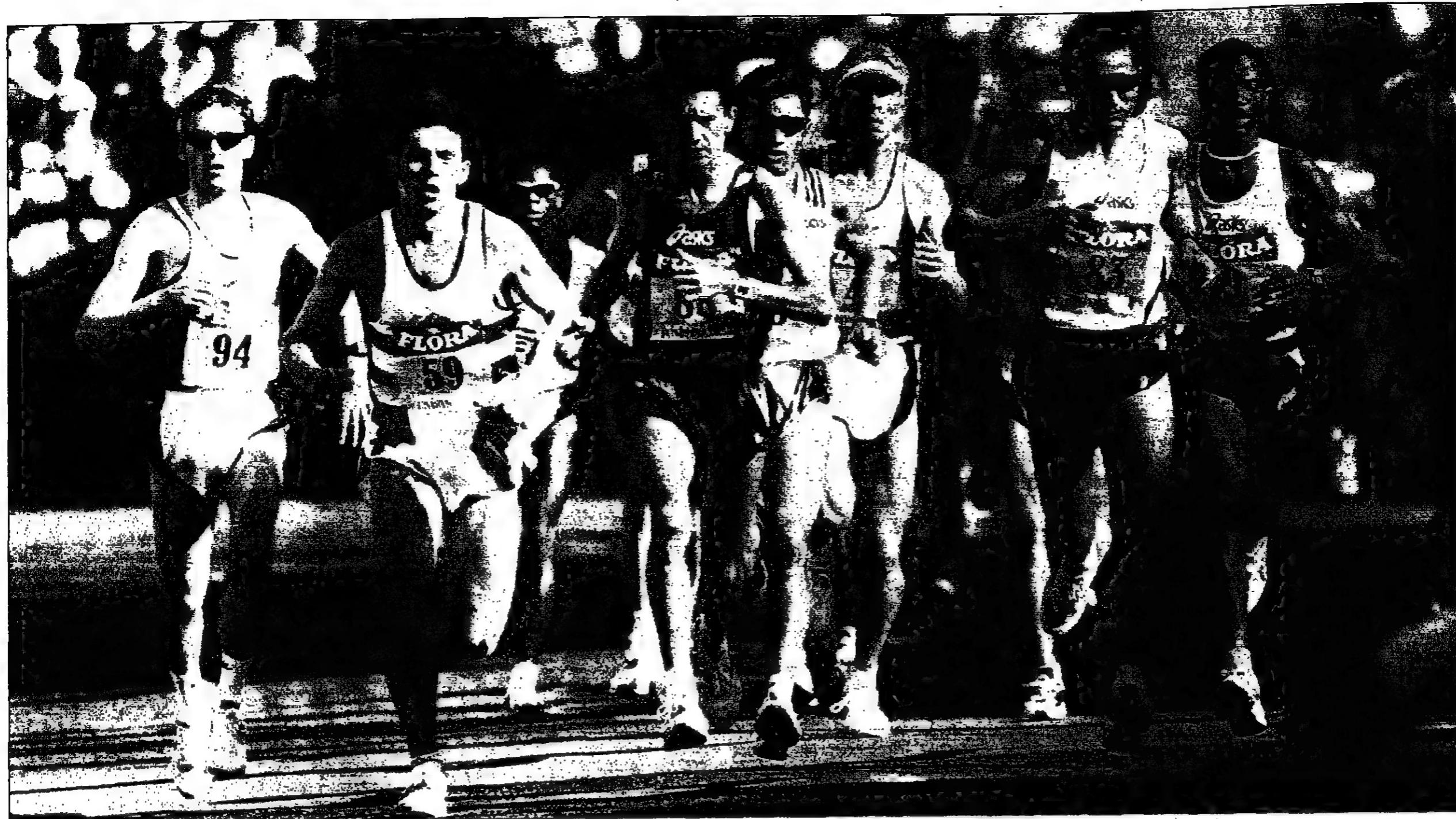
LORD JUSTICE MILLETT said that while the term of a lease, meaning its duration, was not usually regarded as one of the terms and conditions on which a lease was granted, it was not a word of art and should therefore be construed to give effect to what the parties had intended.

The Court of Appeal (Sir Stephen Brown, President, Lord Justice Millett and Sir Christopher Slade) so held on November 3, allowing an appeal by the City of Gloucester Council against Sir Richard Clarke sitting as a deputy High Court judge on May 13, 1996 who declared that on a true construction of the lease dated March 13, 1989 the length of term of the hypothetical leases for rent review purposes should be the 120-year residue of the term granted by the original lease.

AN EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION

THE TIMES

A chance to go the distance for Diana



Wanted: 20 people to run the marathon as fundraisers for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund



The Times has secured 20 places for its readers to take part in the 1998 Flora London Marathon and help raise more than the target of £5 million for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

The Times 20 will be part of Team Flora, in which all the runners will be fundraising for the Memorial Fund, one of the two official charities for the race next year. A special panel has been set up to select readers wanting to 'Run for Diana' over the historic distance through the streets of London on Sunday, April 26.

The Times will also publish the complete results of the race — from the international heroes and heroines at the front to the determined joggers at the back.

There has already been unprecedented interest in the 1998 event. A record 100,000 people applied to enter, including 20,000 who specifically responded to an invitation to run for the Memorial Fund.

This year, it was televised in more than 100 countries and 600,000 people lined the London streets to cheer on



the 29,135 competitors, who ran from Greenwich to the Mall, triumphantly finishing the course of 26 miles 385 yards.

The fund-raising for the Memorial Fund will be poignant for many of the competitors next year because they will be running on the streets where the coffin of the Princess was carried at her funeral on September 6. It will also be 10 years since she was the official starter of the 1988 event.

Applications should not

come from people who have already been informed that they have been selected to take part in the 1998 race.

They should be from those people, who have already been rejected or from anyone else who feels they can be inspired by the attempt to run the epic distance. Both men and women, experienced runners and novices, will be considered.

The names of the chosen 20 will be published in *The Times* on Monday, January 19 and the newspaper will

then highlight some of the runners' stories and preparation in the build-up to the event itself.

All the members of Team Flora will be supported and helped with all aspects of the marathon running and fund-raising, from training and nutrition to self-motivation, by a specially-selected support team. Every penny raised by the 250 runners will go to the Memorial Fund, as all administration costs will be covered by the Flora London Marathon.

THE TIMES DIANA TEAM COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

Read the form below carefully: the judges will base their decision on what you reveal in this form. All the winners who take part in the marathon on April 26 will be asked to sign a pledge form relating to their commitment to raise funds for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and to remit such funds by May 31, 1998. Our

entry forms for the chance to win a place in the Diana Team should reach the following address by January 9, 1998: *The Times* Diana Team, Flora London Marathon, PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY. Judging will take place on January 14 and the winners will be informed by telephone by January 19.

Title _____ Initials _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Day tel _____

Eve tel _____

Age _____ Female Male

Occupation _____

Which category do you wish to enter?

Men Women

Do you suffer from any illness/ailment?

Have you been in hospital for an operation? If yes, state what and when

Have you, a relative or friend, ever met Princess Diana? If yes, describe the occasion

Have you, a relative or friend, any connection with any of the Diana, Princess of Wales, charities, or a special reason for wanting to be in the Diana team? Describe your connection

Have you ever competed in a marathon before?

How much money did you raise?

For which organisation/s?

Have you raised funds for any organisation/s before?

Describe how much you raised and how you did it

Do you have any outstanding achievements of which you are proud? Tell us about them

What are your hobbies?

State, in not more than 50 words, why you deserve a place in this year's marathon

Please send the completed entry form to:
The Times Diana Team, London Marathon,
PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY

CHANGING TIMES

J.P. JONES

THE SECTION FOR CARS, BIKES, BOATS AND EVERYONE ON THE MOVE



The car made from bottles galore

Page 45



How the other half go hunting

Page 46



A pilot who rose to the challenge

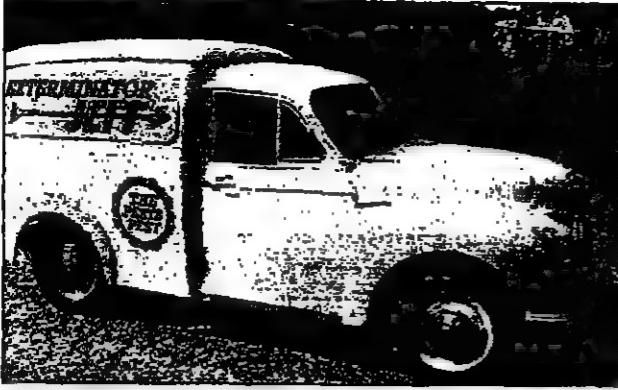
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GO

SATURDAY DECEMBER 1997

Minor celebrity at 50 years old

Kevin Eason on the stodgy British mainstay that has become a new big-screen icon



Minor van belonging to henchman Jeff the Terminator

In a gentler world where the beer was warm and the cricket on the green was played out under a bright sun, everyone would drive a Morris Minor.

And they do in the imaginary screen world of *The Borrowers*. Mary Norton's charming story of 4in-high people who live in the nooks and crannies of an English family home.

Little Morris are the only cars to popularise the cobbled streets in the film version of the tale, one of the Christmas blockbusters this year and starring John Goodman.

With their skinny tyres and primitive interiors, they had the most distinctive exhaust noise.

For the lovable Moggie defined postwar British motoring: it was small, practical and about as luxurious as powdered eggs.

Even Lord Nuffield, William Morris himself, was less than impressed when the covers were pulled from the first prototype 50 years ago. "Looks like a poached egg," he huffed sullenly at his design team, eyes narrowing at the pasty, thin young chap who joined Morris just before the outbreak of the war.

Unusually, the designer — Sir Alec Issigonis, who later went on to invent a little model called the Mini — was given responsibility for every piece of the car. He later said he had drawn everything down to the door handles and the little knob on the tiny glovebox. So he was more than hurt when

new-fangled and increasingly fashionable models from Japan and Germany.

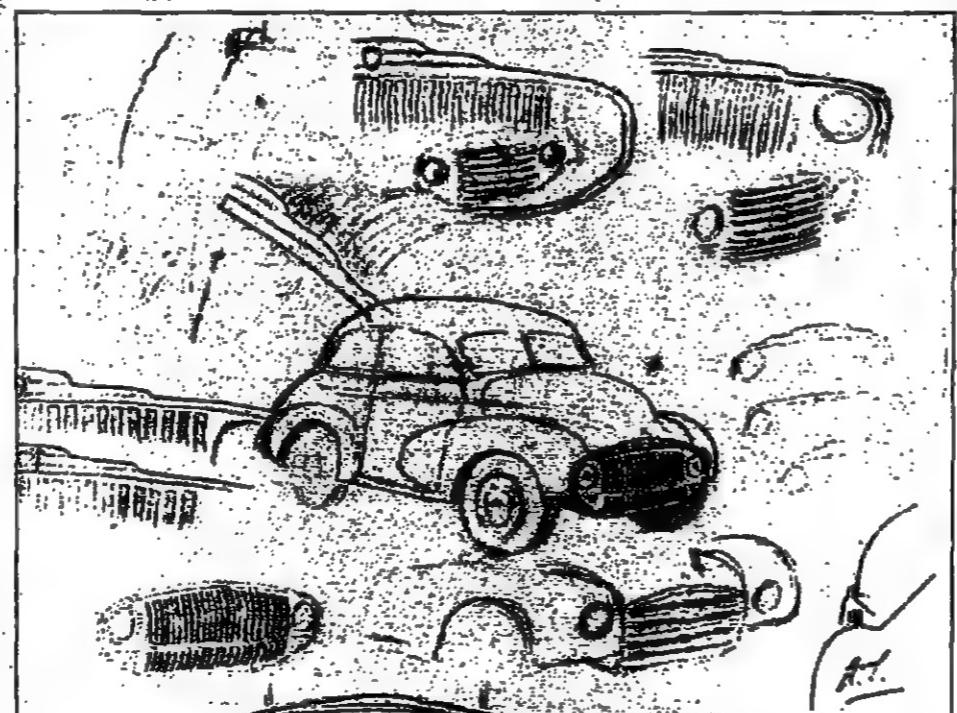
But if you grew up in the Fifties, you knew somebody who had a Morris Minor. With their skinny tyres and primitive interiors, they had one of the most distinctive exhaust noises of any car, emitting an extraordinary raspberry as the spindly gearstick was shoved up a notch.

And they were incredibly simple and durable. The first cars were fitted with pre-war side-valve 903cc engines which plopped into the engine bay with room to spare, so if running repairs were needed, even a driver with the worst case of fingers and thumbs could find a way around the carburettor, plugs and points.

To prove just how tough the



Oxford bags an extraordinary stretched version of a venerable Morris Oxford features among the "poached eggs" that fill the film version of the classic children's story



Issigonis's original sketches: he designed everything down to the glovebox handle

Minor was, Morris conducted its own test in 1952: a nonstop 10,000-mile run.

Engineers wanted to know how the mechanical parts would stand up to running without cooling down. They devised a special trailer, on to which the Minor would run for refuelling and driver changes without having to stop, and then took the car to the famous Goodwood circuit in Sussex.

The run started at 6am on October 1. SJO 624 was fitted with a new 803cc engine provided by Austin, Morris's stablemate in the newly-formed British Motor Corporation, and off it chugged around the windswept track.

Almost ten days later, the car achieved 10,000.76 miles at an average speed of about 45mph and returned 41.9mpg — pretty good for a car even today.

But its originator was Issigonis, one of the most brilliant minds the motor industry has produced and probably the only designer next to Ferdinand Porsche



Minor sold in droves — but for the company's apathy, it could have sold many more

LANDMARKS IN THE MOGGY'S LIFE

- First Morris sold was an Oxford in 1913
- Last Morris was sold in 1983 when it was phased out by BL, later Rover
- First British car with headlights faired into the wings was the 1939 Morris Series-E
- Britain's first £100 four-cylinder car was a Minor two-seater convertible, launched on New Year's day, 1931



Rover 14 used to be owned by doctors and other professionals, as they were considerably dearer than Austins

TV star saved from death plot

Vaughn Freeman on a rare Rover set to be killed with Penelope Keith

Film-makers who had planned to crash and burn a rare pre-war Rover saloon in the interests of artistic integrity have changed their minds, and instead the car has found a new lease of life with an enthusiast.

The Rover, which will be seen driven by Penelope Keith this Spring in the television series *Coming Home*, was to have been destroyed within the next few weeks in a dramatic flaming end to the series and to the Penelope Keith character.

When news of the automotive murder spread through the classic car community, there was outrage. Now that the 1936 Rover 14 is to be spared, relief is the order of the day.

The Rover would not have been the first star car to "die" at the behest of film and television directors.

An E-Type Jaguar was just one of the cars that was filmed apparently meeting a violent on-screen end in the classic film *The Italian Job*, and every week cars are wrecked.

many of them around however. Even at Rover club meetings you only see a few.

Cliff Evans of the Rover Sports Register, which has 1,400 members who own all sorts of Rovers, says: "The Rover 14 is a nice car. My own car is the 1936 Rover 12, which is very similar, and, like the 14, does not have a boot. Instead it has a spare wheel on the back with a metal cover and brackets for extensions that carry luggage."

The Rover 14 was mostly used by doctors and professional people, because compared with the Austin and Morris cars of the time they were around £150 dearer and would sell for £300 to £350.

"They are not hugely valuable, but a car that has been well restored might fetch £8,000 and a car in perfect condition would fetch a little more. There are not very

many of them around however. Even at Rover club meetings you only see a few.

"I am very pleased that this car has been reprieved. I hate to see them destroyed. You often see something like a Jaguar MkII being tipped over a cliff and it always make me gasp with horror."

H adds: "It is always better to see a Rover restored and back on the road rather than being destroyed, but then perhaps I am biased."

Chris Thompson, art director for Portman Productions, which makes the television series *Coming Home*, says:

"The plan initially was that the car would be destroyed in a crash and that it would burst into flames."

The series is based on Rosamunde Pilcher's novel of the same name, which specifies that the character por-

trayed by Penelope Keith drives a Rover, and that the vehicle, with her in it, dies a fiery death.

Now though viewers will see the car heading at speed towards a haycart. Images will flash between exterior shots of the car heading for oblivion, and to an increasingly frantic Penelope Keith inside the car. But the carnage will be left to the viewer's imagination, as the crash is blacked out.

The plan at first was actually to crash the car. Now though we are going to cheat. We have spent quite a bit of money restoring the car, in the region of £2,000, and although it is not in immaculate condition, it seems extravagant to destroy it."

The car has already found a new, more restful home, having been sold after completion of filming for the modest sum of £1,000. A Portman Productions spokesperson said: "I think in the end we were rather generous when we came to sell it, but it is nice that it did get saved."

SATURDAY DECEMBER 20 1997

go

Hawking a new idea for the hunt

PAUL ROGERS/NEWSTEAM



Toyota Hunter is roofless and a metre longer than a standard Land Cruiser. The vehicle has a tuned engine and an extra axle for selectable four or six-wheel drive. Its hydraulically controlled spotting seat can rise more than 2ft

Dave Selby on go-anywhere machines for storming after turkeys through the desert

This is how the other half hunt. In the far-off days of Empire, Indian Maharajahs commissioned extravaganzas: Rolls-Royces and Daimlers upholstered with endangered species, festooned with ruby-eyed bows and silver plate, in their pursuit of big game.

For centuries past, in the Middle East, those who hunt for food and sport in the desert have used camels, horses, and falcons. The falcon remains, but modern sportsmen have replaced the horses and camels with the latest four-wheel-drive machines converted into ultimate hunting vehicles by specialist coach-building and engineering companies.

The prey is the houbara, or desert turkey, and you can bet that one or two won't make it as far as Christmas — at least not now this amazing six-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruiser has left the West London workshops of Taylor Mead Engineering for its final destination in the Middle East.

Similar vehicles have been made

TOYOTA HUNTER

Body: Lexus Land Cruiser converted by Taylor Mead Engineering. 1m longer than standard car to accommodate extra axle. Engine: 4.77cc, 270bhp six-cylinder, 24-valve petrol. Transmission: five-speed manual with high and low ratios. Permanent four-wheel drive, selectable six-wheel drive. Equipment: hydraulic spotting seat with 2ft elevation, reinforced suspension and Kevlar body armour. Price: About £43,000 for car and about £100,000 for conversion.



The Jankel Group has just created a Range Rover-based version.

bought around £43,000 worth of left-hand-drive Land Cruisers — an American Lexus model with all the extra refinements and luxury garnish. Now, at a cost of approximately £100,000, it has been converted into what Taylor Mead boss Jim Fakouri hopes his wealthy client will consider to be the ultimate hunting vehicle.

Says Iranian-born Fakouri:

"With customers in this market, you get one chance — no excuses.

Every time the vehicle is taken out,

six-wheel drive, and a hydraulically controlled spotting seat that rises more than 2ft. To ensure its performance and reliability are exactly what his client demands, it has been tested at secret MoD facilities and put through its paces on-road, off-road, on-sand, and at a tank proving ground.

Says Iranian-born Fakouri: "With customers in this market, you get one chance — no excuses. Every time the vehicle is taken out, it will be driven as if it's the last time. It's got to stand up to the most extreme abuse and remain utterly reliable, trip after trip."

Falcone Neal explains what the shiny silver Hunter will have to endure: "Tracking a houbara could take half a day alone. The spotter sits high in the spotting seat with his Saker falcon and when the birds spot the prey that's when the chase begins. I've seen hunting vehicles thundering along over sand dunes and rocks, leaving the ground at 50-60mph."

During our demonstration ride the 4.77cc six-cylinder engine sounds a little more purposeful than any Land Cruiser I've heard. The catalyst has been removed and the engine has been converted to run on leaded petrol, which unleashes 40-50bhp. The engine management unit has also been modified to give a further power increase of 60-70bhp.

RANGE ROVER

Range Rover HSE with roof removed and extended by 1m for third axle. Engine: Tuned version of 4.6-litre V8, which gives 225bhp in standard form. Transmission: Permanent four-wheel drive, switchable six-wheel drive. Equipment: Standard suspension replaced by reinforced springs. Elevating passenger seat that lifts to level of windscreen top, falcon stand, fridge and gun rack. Price: £49,325 for standard HSE plus £50,000-£120,000 for conversion.

Sitting in the deep rear seats the ride feels pliant and smooth — until Fakouri pretends he's spotted his prey. In pursuit he runs the Hunter round an imaginary roller-coaster course: "Faster, higher, bumpier and faster than anything at Alton Towers. He even throws in a leap for good measure as we're catapulted from our seats and only just caught by the high backs. I kept the speed down because we haven't fitted the seat-belts and all the grab rails yet," he said.

This Hunter is more pumped up than anything on television's *Gladiators*. What was an automatic Land Cruiser now has a Toyota five-speed manual gearbox, re-engineered by Taylor Mead with toughened steel cogs, gears and chains. Fakouri explains: "There's nothing wrong with the original, but this vehicle is going to be subjected to extreme forces and we have to be absolutely certain it can cope — there's no RAC relay service in the desert."

Fakouri describes his company's approach as "total over-engineering", and it seems to pay off. So delighted is the new owner that on his recommendation a friend has ordered one just like it — well, not quite. The friend wants his 10cm longer and turbocharged. Well, you might as well keep a little ahead of the Jones's.

Alan Copps compares two Ford and VW products that come off the same production line

The Ford Galaxy, Volkswagen Sharan and Seat Alhambra all come off the same production line in Portugal.

Once such unlikely combinations would have been classified under the pejorative term of "badge engineering", something invented in the 1960s when burgeoning conglomerates swallowed small companies and then abused customer loyalty by sticking hollowed symbols on second-rate products.

But in the more sophisticated climate of the 1990s there are some advantages for the buyer who takes the trouble to examine the results of such unlikely automotive alliances.

Chief among these must be the enormous range of engines now available in these joint-venture vehicles. Two examples of the Ford/VW product illustrate this point.

Sibling rivalry among the people movers

The Sharan I tried was powered by a 1.9-litre turbodiesel that produces a very respectable 110bhp. There can be no more economical way of lugging seven people and their baggage around the country-side. Some engines feel merely adequate but this one felt indestructible, and its economy — given the size of the vehicle and its ability to cruise smoothly close to the motorway speed limit — was remarkable.

The diesel engine has suffered a bad press in recent years, but for many people its extra torque and economy still

outweigh any doubts about emissions. Now there is a new generation of diesel engines that manufacturers claim are just as refined as petrol units, much cleaner than previous diesels and return astonishing fuel consumption.

The VW engine is one of the best. Even when driving a vehicle as large as the Sharan through towns, it returns more than 33mpg, rising to well over 50mpg out of town. With a torque figure of 173lb per square foot at only 1,900rpm that's an awful lot of pulling power for your pounds at the pump. Unusually for an

MPV, it can also be teamed with an automatic transmission.

This would be an excellent engine to choose if economy is top of your list or if you are planning to do a lot of towing or heavy load lugging.

What the Sharan and the Galaxy share is the versatile interior, seven seats with the front row able to swivel right round and the back two rows easy to remove once you've mastered the technique. If you travel a lot with children the MPV has advantages. Kids love the high-riding position, there are few vehicles in which my four-year-old daughter has

sat so uncomplainingly on a six-hour journey.

VW has put much thought into accessories to exploit this child-friendliness, including an integrated child seat with its own harness; thus overcoming the lack of a three-point belt in the middle seat. The smallest child seat, for babies, has a rocking position for use outside the car.

But what about the dreadful fiddly radio controls? It seems odd that a company like VW, which has obviously put a lot of thought into its latest products, perseveres with such nail-breaking devices. By contrast, the Galaxy I drove had all the audio controls on a separate stalk on the left of the steering column, so changing the station or volume could all be done without taking hands off the wheel.

Which of these joint-venture vehicles you choose is mainly a matter of brand loyalty. You can get a Galaxy with VW's turbodiesel engine, but you can't get a Sharan with Ford's 16-valve 2.3-litre engine. This makes the Galaxy a relaxed cruiser which reaches 60mph in a fraction over ten seconds.

A combined cycle figure of 28mpg falls short of the diesel's economy but compares well with other petrol engines. But mid-range power and a 121mph top speed are impressive, and just what the Galaxy needs for long distance or motorway driving.

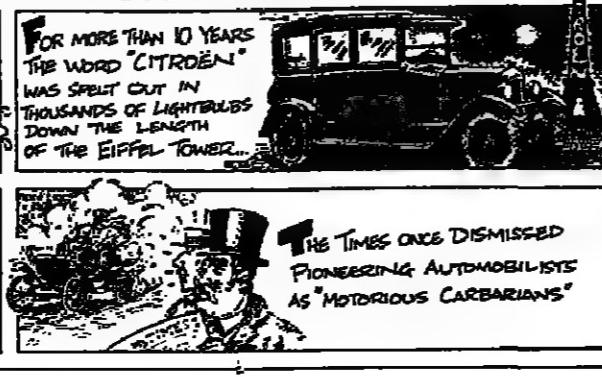
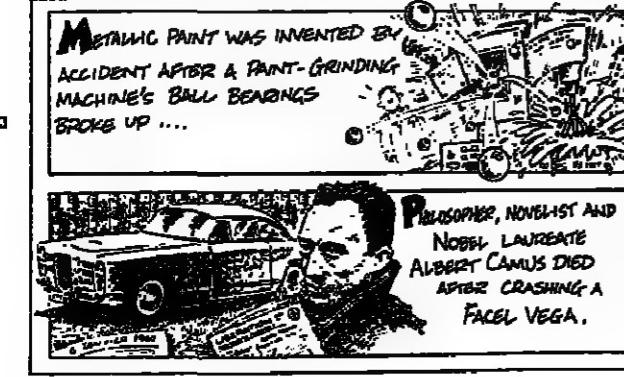


VW Sharan SE, with a frugal 1.9-litre turbodiesel that gives good power, costs £21,724



Ford Galaxy GLX has a stronger, thirstier 2.3-litre petrol engine, and costs £20,205

AUTOFAX by Les Evans and David Long



JPS/10/12/97

THE TIMES-UNI TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

**ISA NO GOOD 50**

Readers give their views on individual savings accounts

WEEKEND MONEY

GO FOR BROKER 53

How to select the right person for your deals



The furore over the Paymaster General and Orion Trust has thrust trusts into the spotlight. Gavin Lumsden reports

Taking rather a lot on trust

Geoffrey Robinson the millionaire Paymaster General who enraged Middle England with his announcement of the individual savings account two weeks ago, could save millions of pounds in capital gains tax because of the unusual circumstances of the Orion offshore trust of which he is a beneficiary.

This is unlikely to endear him to the 500,000 people who learn that they may have to pay tax on their savings over £50,000 once the Isa is introduced in 1999, particularly as most will be unable to retrace the route that led him to his good fortune. To understand why, you have to go back to basics and look at why most trusts are set up, how they are used and who is involved.

In essence trusts are a way of transferring ownership of a property into the hands of a trustee who will manage it for the benefit of someone else. There are three people involved: the settlor who sets up the trust; the beneficiary who benefits from it and the trustees who is obliged to manage the trust in good faith for the beneficiary.

By splitting the legal and beneficial ownership of a property, trusts are useful for people planning their wills or wishing to provide income for members of their family. Trusts can also provide continuity at death by avoiding the complication and expense of probate (determining to whom a property belongs).

Zealous entrepreneurs have been known to use trusts to protect the businesses they have established from being squandered by their descendants. Less honourably, they are often used to obscure the ownership of a property. Partners preparing to divorce their spouses sometimes use trusts as a hideaway for assets they do not want to split, for instance.

Controversy has dogged trusts since their earliest days. From the 13th century they enabled Franciscan friars, who were otherwise pledged to lead lives of poverty, to live in grand properties bestowed on them by wealthy individuals who retained the legal ownership without the benefit

The latest furore has naturally focused on how trusts can be used to avoid paying tax. How-

ever, it is possible to overplay this aspect. Although trusts do shift the liability for tax from one person to the other, at the end of the day, someone, whether it is the settlor, trustee or beneficiary, will pay tax.

Even offshore, where UK tax rules do not apply, tax avoidance is not the only reason for setting up a trust. Wealthy individuals with interests around the world will coordinate their affairs through an offshore tax haven for simplicity as much as reducing their tax bill. Indeed since 1991 there have been no tax advantages for UK residents either setting up or benefiting from trusts offshore.

Maurice Fitzpatrick of Chambre Vellacott said: "It is a widespread myth that if an ordinary UK domiciled resident puts money in an offshore trust it will escape all forms of tax." If an offshore trust sells an asset it will be the settlor resident in the UK who foots any capital gains tax. Similarly, beneficiaries living in the UK will pay tax on any income from the trust. Mr Robinson and the Orion Trust are an exception which we will come to later.

There are four basic types of trust, each with different tax implications. Generally speaking, the more flexible a trust is, the more involved the tax process becomes. It is essential to seek the help of a professional adviser, such as an accountant or solicitor. Costs vary but for an onshore trust are generally about £1,000 to £2,000 and double this for an offshore trust.

From the 13th century, trusts enabled Franciscan friars to live in grand properties bestowed on them by wealthy individuals who retained the legal ownership without the benefit

nately for Mr Robinson, the media spotlight has not focused on the Geoffrey Robinson Personal Settlement as his blind trust is called.

■ ABSOLUTE TRUSTS: These are the simplest. Here the beneficiary (or beneficiaries) is named from the start and has an absolute right to income and capital from the trust usually from the age of 18. They are also liable to pay the tax. Once set up, the trust is irrevocable.

Settlers can also be beneficiaries. For example, government ministers, such as Geoffrey Robinson, set up so-called blind trusts to manage their shares and business interests before they take office. By putting their assets under the management of a trustee, ministers hope to avoid any accusations of conflict of interest, although they are often given wide powers when they are appointed so they can choose when and to

whom of the beneficiaries to give some of the capital. With these trusts the tax burden shifts to the trustee who pays income and capital gains taxes at the basic rate, although the use of indemnity and annual exemptions will reduce the latter bill. Any income received by beneficiaries will be accompanied by a tax credit: this means

the discretion of the trustees in this specialist trust. Because it is unclear where the tax liability will fall, the Inland Revenue charges a punitive rate of 34 per cent on the trust. Inheritance tax may have to be paid by settlors when transferring their assets into the trust or by the trustees on each ten-year anniversary or when funds leave the

wishing to bestow income and/or capital on their children or grandchildren when they reach a certain age (between 18 and 25). Provided there are two or more beneficiaries sharing a common grandparent and that income from the trust is accumulated, or spent on the beneficiaries' education or maintenance, this is the most

because it is in an offshore haven, but because the woman who set it up, Joska Bourgeois, was a non-UK resident and therefore outside the scope of UK tax law. Because she died in 1994, Mrs Bourgeois, a Belgian national living in Switzerland, has effectively put Orion beyond the reaches of the UK taxman for ever.

Instead, Mr Robinson sold the right to buy the shares to Stenbell, another company he owned, which sold them on again to Orion. By transferring them to Orion he could be confident that a trust of which he was a potential beneficiary could benefit from the growth in the shares free of tax.

According to Mr Fitzpatrick, it is a classic case study in how to use an offshore trust.

The effect of this could be dramatic if the TransTec shares continue to perform. In the past two years they have doubled in value. Orion now owns £13 million of the company's shares. If they were to double again the trust will have gained £13 million. Ordinarily, this would produce a £5 million capital gains tax bill — but not for Orion or Mr Robinson or any other beneficiary of the trust.

Since 1991 there have been no tax advantages for UK residents setting up or benefiting from offshore trusts

non-taxpayers can reclaim the tax. Basic-rate payers have nothing to pay, while those on the higher rate pay the difference between the basic and higher rates.

■ DISCRETIONARY TRUSTS: Any benefit paid to the beneficiaries is entirely at

trust. The Orion Trust is a discretionary trust. It plays to different rules because its settlor was a non-UK citizen living abroad.

■ ACCUMULATION AND MAINTENANCE TRUSTS: The most popular trust, this structure is used by settlors

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Roll up for the tax dream

We can dream. For a generation, there has been wide agreement that taxes on savings and investment should be as neutral as possible. Dream on. As Gordon Brown strives to reform the tax system, if only because it is there tax threatens to dominate investment again until he has tired of playing with his fiscal powers.

All taxes distort people's choices, distort markets and therefore distort the economy. But the quest for neutrality is not a plea to let off, if only because that means higher taxes and worse distortions elsewhere in the system. It is merely a desire for our rational investment choices to be allowed to follow as closely as possible the economic returns available on different kinds of assets and enterprises.

In much of the postwar period, tax considerations drove investors' decisions, along with exchange controls and inflation. By the 1970s, tax breaks or tax avoidance had become the dominant, often the only, selling point for investment schemes. They cloaked high costs and poor returns on life policies, corruption at Lloyd's and crooked offshore. Investors knew they should never choose investments primarily for tax reasons. But taxes made such a difference that you could not ignore them.

Nigel Lawson did the most of any recent Chancellor to reduce tax distortions in the economy, by cutting tax breaks to pay for cuts in tax rates. He even started on investment life assurances have never forgiven him for axing premium relief, and their inclusion in individual savings accounts is poor recompence, unless they use Isa policies as loss-leaders. By contrast, one purpose



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

of introducing personal equity plans and changes in tax rules for unit trusts was to allow at least some investment in shares to be more comparable to endowment or pension plans.

Reforms came to a shuddering stop, however, when Lord Lawson of Blaby, as he now is, rolled up his sleeves to tackle the generous reliefs available to pension schemes. The industry fought back and political resistance was too great. Pension schemes are such an inflexible, unattractive proposition that few would sign up unless they were bribed by the Inland Revenue. If not employers,

Can it be a coincidence that mis-selling of tax-advantaged personal pensions swiftly became the biggest investment scandal of the 1990s? Even now, the Government faces an awkward choice between costly extra tax rebates or legal compulsion if it is to get its planned stakeholder pension off the ground.

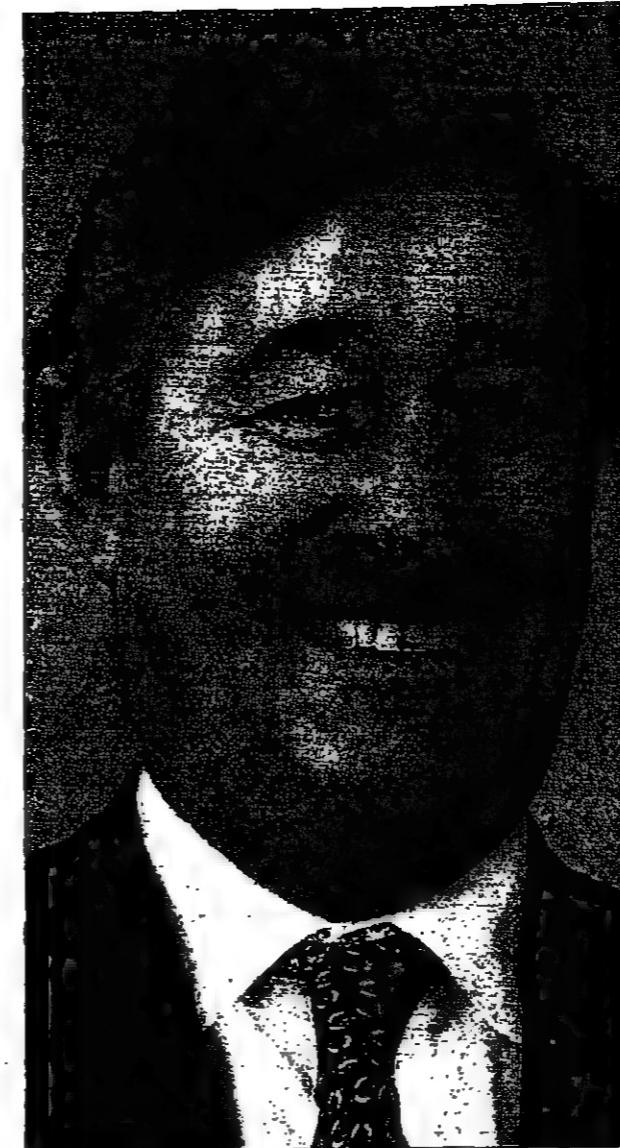
What investors really, really want from successive Chancellors is to be allowed to roll up the returns on their savings without paying tax. Incentives and offshore centres will be the winners.

to put money aside or tax liabilities when it is time to turn investment into consumption are a matter for the Chancellor of the time.

For many, Mr Brown has already cut returns on shares relative to bonds, deposits or property. But that aim should inform any further changes. Minor adjustments could, for instance, make unit and investment trusts true roll-up investment vehicles without having to use fancy techniques. Similar vehicles that allow investors to switch or choose their own shares would usefully compensate for loss of Peps, even if returns are taxed on withdrawal.

To judge from the latest leak, the Treasury has backed away from its pre-election plan to tax short and long-term capital gains differently. That is a mixed blessing. CGT is a malign tax but a necessary one. That is why it is so complex and why reforms to make it fairer and simpler are so elusive. For most modest stock market investors, the annual tax-free allowance has eased distortion. The Chancellor should resist the high temptation to axe it, but investors should not bet on him doing so and should plan accordingly.

The next reform zone is inheritance tax. There too, Labour's pre-election prejudice is to tax the rich more, the very approach that has forced successive Chancellors to supply more loopholes the richer you are and make the tax take small. This tax cries out for the Lawson approach. A 10 per cent rate with few exceptions would minimise distortion, hurt less and raise more. Again, do not bet on it. More likely, tax consultants and offshore centres will be the winners.



Geoffrey Robinson took responsibility for the account

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OFFSHORE FUND PERFORMANCE TO 3RD NOVEMBER 1997				
	LAUNCH DATE	SINCE LAUNCH % CHANGE	POSITION IN SECTOR	5 YEARS % CHANGE
International Growth	25.1.83	+467.4	3 out of 17	+100.2
Emerging Companies	8.4.85	+750.5	1 out of 20	+125.9
American Growth	21.4.84	+1056.1	1 out of 12	+262.1
Far Eastern Growth	8.11.86	+336.9	1 out of 13	+98.8
Japanese Growth	30.11.91	+0.6	13 out of 22	+4.9
European Growth	8.11.86	+267.5	5 out of 6	+134.9
UK Growth	24.10.87	+418.3	1 out of 26	+176.4
Asian Smaller Markets	8.3.92	+40.6	8 out of 68	-
Latin American Growth	31.1.95	+25.4	21 out of 27	-

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Protest grows at Isa plan

Two weeks ago we asked readers of Weekend Money if they were interested in taking part in the Government's consultation procedure regarding the new individual savings account. The answer has been a resounding 'yes' as we have received hundreds of letters from all over the United Kingdom, many of them covering the same themes.

Many commented on the lack of thought that has gone into how this major piece of legislation will affect the majority of retired, and soon to be retired, ordinary working people and middle-class professionals who have been saving towards their retirement.

Others pointed out that £50,000 is not a lot of money to fund healthcare and possibly residential care as they grow older. Others agreed that the idea that the poorest in society will suddenly be able to find the cash to afford them because Isa products will be sold in supermarkets, is particularly fallacious. Here we print a selection from the letters we have received.

We feel betrayed by new Labour

From Mr C.J.B. Nitche
Sir, I write as a 60-plus who retired recently after a full career in the Services and ten years working as an insurance auditor. My wife and I are one of the many families who have sought to work hard, educate and provide opportunities for our children, and to save sensibly for retirement and to be independent of state assistance in old age.

With this at background, I feel that we can't be alone in being dismayed and disillusioned by Labour's consultative proposals for Isa to replace Tessa and Peps from April 1, 1999. In good faith and encouraged by successive governments we, like many others, have used these accounts to build up our savings.

With the limits on permitted subscriptions, there was never

any hint that the accounts could or would lose the tax concessions which made them attractive to the general saver.

To propose, as Labour does, a £50,000 limit on transfers of savers' existing Peps and Tessa to Isa is a cynical betrayal of people's trust.

I hope that you will campaign strongly against this measure. If Labour wishes to insist that Peps and Tessa should cease, surely the only honest way is to stop further accounts being opened or additional funds invested from a particular date — but without in effect penalising those who have save through these medium in recent years.

Yours faithfully,
RON LAW,
The Hermitage,
Easton Royal,
Pewsey, Wiltshire.

Double the Isa limit

From Dr Ron Law
Sir, The sum permitted within the Isa should be at least doubled, especially in the case of pensioners, for two reasons.

First we face a demographic time bomb, with the number surviving to 95 years and increasing by 74 per cent to 1,767,000 over the next 35 years (national population projections from the Office for National Statistics). This exponential growth in the extremely old will place an increasing physical and financial burden on the community. This frail group can only come from the cohort of those who reach pensionable age. Another arm of the Government has recognised this problem within the past few days by the appointment of a royal commission to look into extreme age and dependency.

Secondly, public services are bleeding experienced professional staff as teachers, police, doctors and other civil servants take early retirement, seize their lump sums and often return to part-time jobs. This loss of experience is a severe problem, especially as professional training has lengthened and the number of useful years has declined at both ends of working life. To help to overcome this, those retiring aged 60 or later should be allowed to top up their Isa by an increasing proportion of their lump sum up to a certain limit.

RON LAW,
1 Beechworth Close, NW3.

How many Peps?

From Mr Peter Marshall
Sir, One issue that appears to have been overlooked in the Government's numbers game is not whether 750,000 or 350,000 people currently have Peps and Tessa of over £50,000 but what this number is likely to be in 18 months' time (October 1999). Based on the recent popularity of Peps and Tessa over the past three to four years I would not be surprised if it was in the order of several million. Anyone

with £30,000 currently invested could expect this to be well in excess of £50,000 based on further contributions and current growth rates. I wonder what the Government's estimate of people with £30,000 is or have they not thought this through like the rest of their proposals?

Yours faithfully,
PETER MARSHALL,
12 Greville Park Avenue,
Ashhead,
Surrey.

Is there a hidden agenda?

From Mr Scott Allen
Sir, Regarding Isa, in general, the press has been excellent and I would add my vote to any lobbying The Times can do. I have tried to contact the Inland Revenue for its free booklet but without success. Lines are obviously jammed.

Politically, the Conservatives lost power because they were held responsible for the decline in house prices and mass redundancies of the mid-declined. They were punished accordingly because the electorate would not forgive and certainly did not forget.

Now Gordon Brown seems willing to risk losing the re-election of Labour by tampering with the assets of the voters that got him in. He has already hit pensions, now he has sighted Peps and Tessa; no doubt followed by a big hit on capital gains tax. He is doing a good job of alienating Labour from the middle masses.

Tessas are simple and risk-free. They attract genuine savers. Why kill them? To attract more savers the Government requires instant access — but that means lower rates of interest. Why not relax the rules on existing Tessa and retain them? The Isa is a major hit on the concept of Tessa.

Peps' expenses pretty well nullify the tax credit, so these become a vehicle for rolling up capital gains free of tax. The Isa appears to be no different apart from the £50,000 limit, but is your £50,000 permitted to grow "ad infinitum" as it would in a Pep? The cashflow and capital growth prospects

from £50,000 would not be adequate, in any case, to match expenses growing inexorably with inflation. If the intent is to make Isa a quasi-substitute for a pension the limit needs to be at least £100,000.

However, I also see a hidden agenda. The Inland Revenue spends about £44 million to collect £1.1 billion in capital gains tax paid by 100,000 affluent souls. There is no way that a Labour Government is going to let these people off the hook even if it does cost a fortune to get them. They are more likely to try to collect more by eliminating capital gains allowances outside Isa. That mandates investors to get into the Isa.

If CG allowances do disappear, the new incentive is to roll up unrealised gains. No tax is payable until you die, so the IR still won't necessarily increase its yield. My advice to the Government would be to cancel Peps and Isa — retain the tax credits instead of giving them to the industry, and just abolish capital gains tax. That would save them money on CG chasing and £300 million in tax credits that they return via Peps.

Keep a new flexible Tessa by all means for the "new" savers. The Government is so keen on. But remember, you can only save if income exceeds expenditure and no one seems to be considering this.

Yours faithfully,
SCOTT ALLEN,
16 Chervil Way,
Burghfield Common,
Berkshire.

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THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

Insurance rethink after airport fire

The recent fire at Heathrow has highlighted a gap that exists in the small print of many travel insurance policies. Most policies do not include "airport fire" among the criteria for cancellation or delay. Many Heathrow passengers, particularly those who missed connecting flights, will be furious when they discover that their travel insurer will not pay out.

In response to calls from travellers suffering long delays at Heathrow, Preferential travel insurance has added "damage to departure point" to its policy and policyholders will be able to claim against cancellation and/or delay caused by the fire. For Preferential claims information call 0702 422351.

■ Visitors to the new Goldfish Internet Website will now be able to apply for its credit card online. Current APR on the Goldfish card is 19.8 per cent for transactions, 21.1 per cent for cash advances. The site also has details of its reward scheme, which offers money-off perks such as free BT calls and vouchers for use at shops including Boots and Asda. Goldfish is planning to develop the site further to enable customers to manage

LIZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

ANNUAL INCOME			
Rates as at December 18, 1997			
Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)	
1 Year			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.45	
5,000	AIG Life	6.26	
20,000	GE Fin Assur	6.75	
50,000	Hambro Assured	6.80	
2 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	6.00	
3,000	ITT Lloyds & Edin	6.10	
5,000	AIG Life	6.17	
10,000	Hambro Assured	6.80	
3 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.75	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.30	
5,000	Hambro Assured	6.45	
50,000	Hambro Assured	6.55	
4 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.80	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	5.15	
5 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.86	
10,000	Hambro Assured	6.30	

Source: Chamberlain de Broc 0171-434 4222. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

INSTANT ACCESS ACCOUNTS	Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Woolwich 0800 222200	Card Saver Inst Transfer	Instant	£50	7.00	Y/y
C&G 0800 742457	InstantB	£1,000	7.25	Y/y	
Legal & General Bank 0800 111200	Direct Access	Postal	£2,500	7.15	Y/y
Alliance & Leicester 0845 6088860	First Cts Inst	Postal	£10,000	7.50	Y/y

NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS	Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Bristol & West 0800 202121	Postal 30	30 day p	£10,000	7.80	Y/y
Northern Rock 0500 505000	Select 90	90 day p	£10,000	7.90	Y/y
West Bromwich BS 0890 143658	Direct 90	90 day p	£25,000	8.00	Y/y
Investec Bank (UK) 0171 203 1850	Base Plus	1 Year	£2,001	8.00	Y/y

FIRST TESSAS (TAX FREE)	Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Sun Banking Corp 01436 744505	Premier+feeder	5 year	£3,000	7.85	Y/y
Investec Bank (UK) 0171 203 1850	5 year	£3,000	7.85	Y/y	
Bradford & Bingley 0800 227455332	5 year	£1,000	7.75	Y/y	

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

CREDIT CARDS	Card type	Interest per month	APR% per annum	Fee per annum
Capital One Bank 0800 6690000	Visa	0.6496%	7.90%	N/A
Co-operative Bank 0800 1090000	Advantage Visa	0.6494%	7.90%	N/A
Robert Fleming/S&P 0800 8291000	MasterCard/Visa	1.00%	14.00%	£12

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

PERSONAL LOANS	APR	Monthly payment on £5,000 for 3 yrs no insurance
Direct Line 0181 680 9968	12.80%	£183.75
Capital One Direct 0800 216252	12.80%	£189.48
Bank of Scot (Banking) DR 0800 8050805	12.90%	£191.55

NB: A = Minimum age 22 years. B = Windrows via Bank Clearing System. C = No interest-free period. D = Fixed Rate (all other rates variable). E = Introductory rate for a limited period. CH = Interest rates paid on monthly. P = By Post only

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING

Source: MoneyFacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01922 500 077)

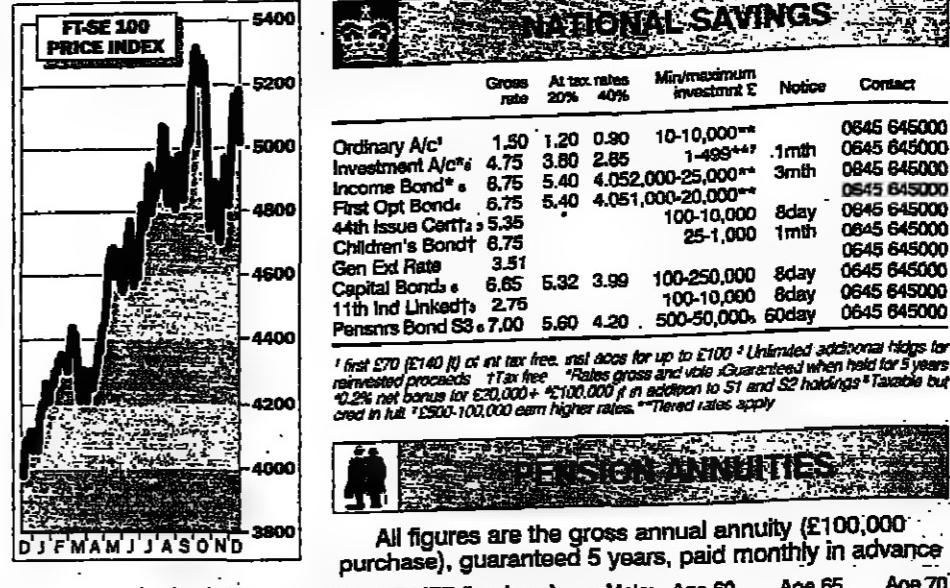
PIBS

PIBS=Permanent interest-bearing share. Source: NatWest Markets

SHARE IN FOCUS: GUARDIAN ROYAL EXCHANGE - BUYS PPP HEALTHCARE



Source: Chamberlain de Broc 0171-434 4222. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.



NATIONAL SAVINGS

Gross	At tax rates	Min/maximum investment £	Notice	Contact		
1.50	1.20 0.90	10-10,000*	1mth	0845 646000		
Investment A/C*	4.75 3.80	2.65	1-485**	0845 646000		
Income Bond*	8.75	5.40	4,050-25,000-20,000**	3mth	0845 646000	
First Opt Bond*	6.75	5.40	4,050-20,000-20,000**	100-10,000	8day	0845 646000
4th Issue Certif.*	5.35		25-1,000	1mth	0845 646000	
Children's Bond*	3.51		100-1,000	1mth	0845 646000	
Gen Ext Rate	3.51		100-1,000	8day	0845 646000	
Capital Bonds*	6.85	5.32	3,99	100-250,000	8day	0845 646000
11th Ind Linktys*	2.75		100-10,000	8day	0845 646000	
Parents Bond S3*	7.00	5.60	4,200	50-50,000	50day	0845 646000

* first £70 (£140 B) of int tax free, inst does for up to £1000. **Interest additional adds for held for 3 years reinvested proceeds. **Tax free. **Rates gross and include stamp duty. *To 31st March 1997. **Taxable but 10.2% net bonus for £20,000 + £10,000 if held for 3 years. **Tered rates apply.

** rates for 1997 (£300-100,000 earn higher rates).

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Clare Stewart on stockbroking services for the private investor



Sold: a broker at Charles Schwab in Birmingham executes a sell order. The company offers a range of services

Going for broker can help you to take stock

The number of people owning shares has grown threefold over the past decade and with a series of building society demutualisations this year now stands at 15 million.

The distribution of windfall bonuses did more to increase the shareholder register in the UK than the privatisations of the 1980s. Now that the year is drawing to a close and people reassess their portfolios, Weekend Money looks at how to buy and sell through a stockbroker or broking service.

Q Where can I find out about brokers in my area?

A The Association of Private Client Investment Managers and Stockbrokers publishes a directory of its members. It gives information on charges, services and whether brokers will also act for smaller investors. The directory is available free from APCIMS, 112 Middlesex Street, London E1 7HY. APCIMS also has an Internet site that can be found at apcims.org and which is updated regularly.

Q What if I just want to do occasional deals?

A The simplest route is a broker offering an execution-only service. The largest in the UK is Charles Schwab, formerly Sharelink. Using its tele-

phone service, there is a minimum charge of £25 per deal.

For investors dealing more often there are two other options which may prove more cost-effective. Charles Schwab's Market Master service charges a minimum fee per deal of £10, with a scale of charges starting at 1 per cent for the first £2,500. There is a quarterly administration fee of £6 minimum. The next step up is the Frequent Traders Club for which there is a flat fee of £16.50 per trade, and a £60 annual fee plus a £6 quarterly charge.

Q What if I want to deal through my local bank?

A High street banks such as Barclays and NatWest can offer execution-only services. About 290 of NatWest's branches offer a touch screen dealing system that allows customers to deal directly themselves. The system offers live stock market prices and the customer may accept or reject the price offered for the sale or purchase of shares. The minimum commission is £20.

For more frequent dealing needs, NatWest customers can register as a direct client which gives access to its BrokerLine services. For execution-only services there is a minimum commission of £20 for UK equities, £65 for international equities and £25 for gilts.

Coutts Bank offers basic dealing services with a mini-

mum commission of £25 on UK equities and gilts plus alongside its investment and portfolio management services.

Q What if I want to get advice on which shares to buy or sell?

A There are usually several levels of advisory service offered by stockbrokers. Customers of NatWest's BrokerLine service, for an extra annual fee of £75, can ring for advice when required.

For more comprehensive advice in handling a range of investments, NatWest has an Advisory Portfolio Service.

"This is more like a traditional stockbroking relationship with the client," says Richard Hunter, head of dealing services. Clients receive regular advice on investment ideas and their portfolios are updated at least twice a year. There is an annual fee of £300 plus VAT, with commission rates on top. The minimum rate for share trading is £35.

Coutts also offers an Investment Advisory Service. "This may range from suggesting where to find a better rate for money on deposit through to foreign currency trading," said Richard Stammers, head of marketing.

There is a management fee of 1 per cent per annum of the capital value of the portfolio, plus VAT charged quarterly with a minimum of £10,000 a year. There is also a minimum commission of £10.

Q What other services can stockbrokers offer?

A Execution-only brokers such as Charles Schwab offer extras such as a monthly New Issues Bulletin detailing new share issues and ShareFinder Report, which supplies financial analysis of companies.

commission of £50 on dealings in equities or unit trusts.

Q Can I hand the whole portfolio over to be managed by a broker?

A A discretionary service offered by a broker means the investor can hand it all over.

In the UK said Mr Stammers, 90 per cent of its clients choose the discretionary service. While the broker makes the decisions, the client is kept up to date with changes and given detailed reports on the portfolio performance.

Coutts charges a management fee made up of 1 per cent of the capital value of the portfolio plus VAT, with a minimum quarterly fee of £375 plus VAT. Commission on share dealings starts at 1.5 per cent on the first £10,000.

NatWest Stockbrokers also offers a discretionary service, with a 1 per cent annual management fee (minimum £700) plus VAT. On UK equities there is a minimum commission of £10.

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Choosing a unit trust from the 1,600 on offer is difficult enough. But trying to decipher the unit trust pricing information published in the newspapers is more than enough to fox most investors.

The unit trust industry presents itself as a provider of simple, transparent products, especially compared with the complexity of life and pension funds.

But the stock market jargon of bid and offer spread, creation units, cancellation units and compound annual return predates the era of personal equity plans (Peps) marketing and can easily baffle the small investor who is new to the market.

The large unit trust groups have made efforts to simplify the information they give to investors, and many, such as M&G and Fidelity, offer a telephone number for investors to obtain an instant quote on the value of their investments, and offer a buying or selling service.

Every day of the week, except for Monday — when no prices are published as the market is closed on Sunday — The Times publishes unit trust prices from the 128 different groups currently managing unit trusts. Every Saturday, the figures are calculated to reflect the performance of the trust over the previous week.

Peps prices are not quoted from unit trust prices. This is because Peps are simply a tax-free wrapper around the underlying investment and have no value in themselves.

If a Pep is invested in a single unit trust, working out its value will follow the same rules (set out below) as a non-Pep unit trust investor. However, complicating the picture is the fact that many Peps are invested in a

portfolio of stocks.

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Patrick Collinson examines the listings and explains some of the technical terms used

INVESTMENT
A GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

not what a unit trust investor will receive.

Tax is automatically deducted at the 21 per cent basic rate before the income is paid out, and higher-rate taxpayers are liable for extra tax. Non-taxpayers can reclaim the basic rate tax that has been deducted.

ACCUM

This abbreviation stands for accumulation units. This is where the trust manager automatically reinvests income back into the unit trust, increasing the unit price. It is not a separate unit trust.

In the example, the selling price of M&G American accumulation units is 800.5p compared with 638.4p for the standard units, which shows the impact of years of reinvesting even a small amount of income can have on the long term value of a unit trust investment.

CORNER BOX

The bottom right corner of The Times unit trust prices page contains further annotations that apply to some unit trusts.

■ Ex-dividend: Unit trusts will distribute income at set points during the year. As the date of distribution approaches, the price will inevitably rise — any buyer is automatically going to receive some income very shortly.

When a unit trust is marked ex-dividend, it means that the price of the unit trust no longer includes the dividend, and is therefore likely to fall back for some time.

■ Periodic charge deducted from capital: Most unit trust groups charge their annual fee (typically 1.5 per cent) against the income generated by the trust.

Some trusts, especially those keen to maintain a high payout, put the charge against the capital of the fund. Either way, the investor pays the same fee and is in exactly the same tax position.

■ Exit Charge: Most trusts typically charge an initial fee of 3 to 5.5 per cent, but a few do not make any initial charge but levy an exit fee if the investor cashes in the investment before a predetermined period, which is typically five years. The exit fee is usually on a sliding scale of 5 per cent in year one falling to 1 per cent in year five.

HOW TO UNRAVEL UNIT TRUST PRICES			
The cash-in-value of each unit, in pence. Multiply by number of units to obtain value of investment	The purchase price of each unit, in pence. Also known as offer price	The price change over the previous day, expressed in pence, not percentage	The gross (pre-tax) income payable on the trust
Sell	Buy	+/- %	Yld %
Accumulation Units, where any income (or dividend) earned is automatically reinvested into the unit trust			
M & G SECURITIES Cust Svcs/Unit Dlg: 01245 390 390			
American 638.40 673.90 + 5.90 0.49	do - Accum 800.50 845.00 + 7.40 0.49		
Amer Recovery 788.40 835.70 + 5.30 0.25	do - Accum 911.90 964.30 + 3.70 0.25		
Amer Smir Cos 183.70 194.30 - 0.60 ..	do - Accum 187.70 198.50 - 0.70 ..		
Australasian 181.40 191.80 + 6.60 2.15	do - Accum 232.10 245.40 + 5.90 2.15		
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A little light reading for go-it-aloners

John Givens asked two recent subjects of the Go-It-Alone column to assess some of the best books on small business

If you were thinking of setting up in business, knowing how to go about it and understanding what your responsibilities are will be key to your future success.

While there are many small business agencies which will help you to get started, the best way to learn the basics is probably to buy one of the growing number of books that will try to turn you into an all-round businessman overnight.

Weekend Money asked leading bookstores to name their best-selling titles for small businesses and got two of the people who have featured in the Go-It-Alone pages in recent weeks to tell us what they thought of them and give star ratings out of five for each title.

Emma Bagnall is a 32-year-old freelance graphic designer from Stoke Newington, North London. Having recently set up as a self-employed worker she is interested in reading about the basics of going it alone, such as book-keeping, tax and VAT.

Ken Wilson, 41, set up his recruitment business, Ken Wilson Associates Ltd, in Newcastle upon Tyne ten years ago after working for an accountancy recruitment agency for six years. He now wants information that goes beyond the initial start-up stage.

The Daily Telegraph — How To Set Up And Run Your Own Business, published by Kogan Page at £11.99. Ken: "This book deals with all the relevant issues generally rather than specifically, but in an uncomplicated and easy-to-read manner. However, the content is delivered very much in an advisory 'what is required' format rather than showing you by example, which in my view would be more helpful. The book carries a lot of advertising which I found distracting and I think a dedicated section at the back carrying ads would improve

its readability."★★★

Emma: "There was a lot of information in this book which, as someone new to being self-employed, was not really relevant to me. I also found it difficult to read, partly because I found many of the diagrams confusing and also because, unusually for a book, there were adverts dotted around which made it hard to read."★★★

Lloyd's Bank Small Business Guide, published by Penguin at £12.

Ken: "Easily the best of the bunch. The thinking man's guide to setting up a business, which comprehensively explains the intricacies of financial preparation and controls and the implications for a business of tax and profits."

The Financial Times — Mastering Enterprise, published by FT Pitman Publishing at £25.

Ken: "What this book does not include is not worth knowing, although it is very weighty and reads a bit like a textbook with lots of business jargon and academic-style philosophies. It makes good use of case studies and is well laid out with plenty of graphs, tables and pictures. However, it is probably not really suitable for someone just setting out and needing basic advice."★★★

Emma: "This is the one I would buy. It is nicely laid out which makes it easy to read and the opening chapter is very good. The book asks and answers a lot of questions and I found the section looking at whether you should set up as a sole trader, partnership or limited company really useful. It explains things very clearly, giving the pros and cons of each option, and the diagrams are also very good."★★★

The Greatest Little Business Book, Prentice Hall, £12.95.

Ken: "This book is ideal for the self-employed or sole trader who understands their market but who has little or no experience of running a business. It offers good basic advice on topics such as tax or other

financial matters and is written in simple English, making it easy to understand. Experienced business men however, would probably find this title a little too basic."★★★

Emma: "Despite the title I didn't think this was the greatest little business book at all. The design is poor throughout, which spoils it. Although the information is down-to-earth it isn't very inviting to read and I found it very difficult to get into. On the plus side, it does mention how important it is for a small business or self-employed person to have a well-designed letterhead and business card, which, as a graphic designer, I would certainly agree with."★★★

The Financial Times — Mastering Enterprise, published by FT Pitman Publishing at £25.

Ken: "What this book does not include is not worth knowing, although it is very weighty and reads a bit like a textbook with lots of business jargon and academic-style philosophies. It makes good use of case studies and is well laid out with plenty of graphs, tables and pictures. However, it is probably not really suitable for someone just setting out and needing basic advice."★★★

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KPI — Your Business Start-Up Action Kit, Kogan Page, £9.99 (£24.99 with CD-Rom).



Emma Bagnall: looking for basics, such as book-keeping and tax

graphics but I think this book fails to connect with the everyday needs of a small business owner."★★★

Emma: "Again, I found this book lacking in basic, practical advice for someone new to business, and topics such as tax and book-keeping for the self-employed were not really covered. I also found the design uninviting, with lots of

graphics and charts which I found irrelevant. I think this title is more suited to readers who already know something about running a business, rather than those new to self-employment."★

KPI — Your Business Start-Up Action Kit, Kogan Page, £9.99 (£24.99 with CD-Rom).



Ken Wilson: now wants information beyond initial start-up stage

Ken: "This is a book and combined CD-Rom which gives business plan layouts among other things. The book is simple and down-to-earth and written in an easy-to-understand style. I think this is a good choice for the new businessman although it is a pity that the CD-Rom, which is very useful, means you've probably got to spend at least £1,000 to buy the hardware to run it."★★★

Emma: "From the point of view of appealing to new set-ups it wasn't too bad, although I found some of the chapters I was interested in a little too short. The CD-Rom looked like it could be very useful but, as I haven't got a system to run it on, I'll never know."



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Gavin Lumsden looks at the Prudential report on mis-selling and asks what to consider when buying a financial product

Pru's attention turns to savers after FSA rap

Prudential is planning to write to some of its customers to find out whether they have been mis-sold savings plans. The move from the Prudential, the UK's biggest insurance company, is in the wake of unprecedented criticism from the Financial Services Authority (FSA) this week.

A visit to Prudential by officials from the FSA earlier this year revealed severe failings in management. The FSA said that the Prudential's direct salesforce had a culture of non-compliance. It also said that the company had failed to rectify some of the shortcomings that had already been identified by the Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the forerunner to the FSA.

John Elbourne, Prudential managing director, said: "We will have to sample on a historic basis some of the policies that have been sold." In particular, the regulatory spotlight has fallen on the Prudential's with-profits savings schemes, which are constructed as life insurance plans. These products are particularly suitable for investors who do not want to take very much risk with their hard-earned money. How-



ever, one of the drawbacks to life insurance products is that the funds themselves are tied in the hands of the company. Non-taxpayers are unable to claim this tax back, which makes them unsuitable.

The FSA claims that Prudential salesmen are guilty of selling these bonds to non-taxpayers. The regulator was also concerned that Prudential had been selling new pension plans to those who already had pension plans — a top-up plan may have been more appropriate.

Mr Elbourne has emphasised that if the company finds that mis-selling has occurred then customers will not be disadvantaged.

This report from the FSA effectively accused the country's largest insurer of letting its 5,000-strong direct-sales force run amok among the public.

Rubbing salt on the wounds, the FSA said its management had demonstrated a long-standing failure to recognise the problems and the company exhibited a cultural disposition against compliance with rules and regulations.

CAROLINE MERRELL

The damning report into the running of the Prudential has put the spotlight on the way that financial services are sold in Britain. There is particular focus on the activities of insurance company representatives and salesmen, intermediaries who can only sell the products of one company. They must sell, or lose, their commission-based livelihoods. Cuts back in salesforce numbers have added to the pressure being applied to these hapless middlemen, with rumours in the industry of impossible targets being set for salesmen.

Although many banks and insurers are developing their links with independent financial advisers (IFAs) and are setting up high-tech call centres with which to reach the public directly and more cheaply, the expectations placed on traditional salesmen remain considerable.

Last year NatWest Life came close to selling its 1,400 life insurance salesforce after a disappointing 1995. Instead it introduced performance-related pay to encourage its staff. In theory the changes meant NatWest financial advisers, who are based in most of the bank's branches, can earn unlimited amounts in bonuses. However, insiders claim the change has created a climate of fear where good financial advice is endangered. One salesman who works in the South East says many of his colleagues have had £2,000 docked from their pay and been given formal warnings for missing quarterly self-imposed targets. Morale has plummeted while staff turnover has soared.

He claims advisers in his region are required to make an average of six and a half sales a week, split equally between life insurance, pensions and investment. This is an extremely demanding target considering each sale requires at least two meetings with customers lasting 60 to 90 minutes each. "I've got to do a fact-find and make an

assessment on each individual. I can't predict what I will sell. Some of my colleagues are simply ordering — if they get a sniff of a sale, they'll go for it. Somebody walks in with £20 surplus on their weekly budget and they'll be sold life insurance because you can buy that with a £20 premium, whether they need it or not."

Lawrence Churchill, managing director of NatWest Life, said: "Affordability is a key part of the regulations we have to conform to. If there is any allegation that unsuitable products are being sold then I am naturally concerned and would want to learn more about it." He denied the existence of a six-and-a-half weekly target, saying the salesforce was making five sales per week per adviser and had had a good year. However, he admitted even this target was higher than most of the industry. Surveys from the investor watchdog have pointed out the limitations of distributing financial services through salesforces, evidence that salesmen make more unsuitable sales. Policyholders cancel their contracts and suffer financial loss.

Recently the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) showed that up to a third of all life insurance, pensions and savings policies bought by the public three years ago had lapsed.

Millions were lost as most of the money paid into these policies would have been swallowed up in charges. Although people's circumstances change — sickness and unemployment are two reasons why many policies are cashed in early — just as often people are sold products they do not need or can't afford.

The PIA's report showed people who take independent financial advice hold on to their policies longer, presumably because they want what they have bought.

Even financial services companies recognise that IFAs are better distributors of their products. The past six years have seen an exodus from the financial services industry as sackings and compulsory retraining have pushed the number of salesmen down from 193,000 to just 58,100.

However, this drastic rationalisation often puts intolerable pressure on the remaining sales teams. This then creates huge potential danger for unwary customers.

WHAT TO ASK BEFORE SIGNING

WHEN buying a policy or a pension, we have listed nine questions the National Consumers Council recommends you ask any financial adviser before parting with your money. The more research you do the better armed you will be.

■ Are you able to give me advice on a range of suppliers or just one company?

■ What happens if I drop out early from the product? Will I get back all the money I paid?

■ My income could fluctuate. What happens if I have to reduce my payments for a month or so or have to stop paying altogether for a short while?

■ There seems to be a range of products that could be suitable for me. How does the commission you would get vary between the alternatives?

■ What proportion are the charges on the products of the amount I am thinking of saving or investing? Is this high compared with other products?

■ What is the worst-case scenario for what could happen to this product?

■ What are the arrangements if the product fails in any way or if the company goes bust?

■ Do you know if there are any other products on the market that are as good or better as the one you are recommending?

■ Is there any independent information I could see on how the product compares with those on the market?

How free is your life insurance company?

How secure are the payouts on your endowment policy or with-profits bond? A survey published earlier this month reveals which companies have the financial strength to underpin future payouts — and which are more vulnerable.

The survey, by Money Marketing and KPMG, the accountant, measures the "free asset ratio" of life insurance firm taken from information supplied to the Department of Trade and Industry. Free assets are the amount a company has above its possible liabilities.

The figures are shrouded in actuarial jargon, but are able to indicate which life offices have greater freedom to make adventurous investments. Those that are strapped for cash tend to put their money into fixed-interest gilts and low-

risk investments, while those with funds well in excess of their liabilities can take a longer-term view and opt for equities.

Bottom of the table (as of December 31, 1996) is Britannia Life, with a free asset ratio of just one sixth of the industry average. Only last week Britannia announced that it was axing 400 jobs and withdrawing from selling products through independent financial advisers because it did not believe it could compete profitably in the long term.

Britannia's ratio of 1.9 per cent is markedly lower than other offices in the table. But John Jenkins, KPMG principal consultant, who compiled the figures for Money Marketing, says it is right to ask questions about any company with a ratio below 10 per cent. "Anything above 10 per cent seems quite comfortable; but if it is below 10 per cent you are justified in asking further questions."

Unfortunately for policyholders, nearly one third of the 35 life companies in the survey have ratios below 10 per cent, including well-known names such as Equitable Life, NPL, Scottish Mutual and Scottish Life.

Craig Wetton, an IFA at Chartwell Investment Management, says financial

advisers look closely at a life office's financial strength before recommending its products. He said: "You have to look at the strength of a company to see if it can meet future obligations. If it gets its investment policy wrong, it needs to have the resources to maintain its solvency."

Equitable Life robustly defends its free asset ratio figure, the third lowest of the companies surveyed, and one that fell last year while the "average" for the industry rose, if only slightly.

Nigel Webb, director of corporate affairs, said: "We operate a full distribution policy. It is policyholders' money — why should you keep back money for future generations?" He also argues that the way the figures are calculated flatters slow-growing companies. "We have been the biggest writer of new business over the past few years and have a lot of young business on the books."

NPL says it, too, has been paying profits out rather than hoarding cash, while Scottish Mutual (owned by Abbey National) and Scottish Life point to analysis by Standard & Poor's, the ratings agency, which awarded them a financial strength rating of AA and A+, respectively.

But Mr Wetton insists that the trend of a company's financial strength is important. "The lower the ratio falls, the more vulnerable is a company to short-term market volatility. A company with a very low ratio could come unstuck."

Standard Life, which has a free asset ratio significantly above the industry average, says that without the cushion of free assets it could not pursue a flexible investment policy. Iain Lumsden, group finance director, said: "Our ratio enables us to keep a high proportion of our funds in equities and obtain higher long-term returns. But we have not had to raise our free asset ratio for five years or more and have not had to take a hit from policyholders."

PATRICK COLLINSON

Standard Life joins the telebanking revolution

The savings war intensified this week as Standard Life, one of the UK's biggest life insurance companies, unveiled plans for its bank. The Edinburgh insurer has become the latest financial institution to realise the potential of offering a telephone banking service.

With no expensive branch network to support, the new breed of telephone banks can afford to offer much better rates on their deposit accounts than their branch-based counterparts. Sainsbury's, Tesco Prudential, Scottish Widows and Virgin Direct have all unveiled telephone banking ventures, offering competitive rates, although Virgin customers must have a mortgage of at least £50,000 with the company.

Standard Life's new telephone-based service pays a rate of 0.76 per cent on balances of as little as £1. This is more than Tesco and J Sainsbury, which pay 0.5 per cent on accounts of £1.

Jim Spawari, managing director of Standard Life Bank, said the account will remain competitive because, as a direct service, it will not have to maintain a branch network.

The announcement this week followed the Halifax's decision to raise the rates for its 15 million savers. Rates on the Halifax's liquid gold instant access account have risen by only 0.15 per cent. A balance of £1 in this account will pay 0.5 per cent. The most anyone can earn from a Halifax instant access account is 1.65 per cent, on balances of more than £25,000 — 2.1 per cent lower than the lowest rate offered by Standard Life. Savings of more than £25,000 with the Scottish insurer will attract a rate of 7.3 per cent — 2.65 per cent higher than the Halifax.

The group also plans to launch fixed-term savings accounts and will bring in mortgages, followed by personal loans next summer.

Even after the rise in the new year, the Halifax will only offer a similar rate for balances of greater than £50,000 on its 60-day notice account.



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Rates will rise the furthest on the Halifax's Bonus Gold account, which requires a minimum of £10,000. The increase will be 0.3 per cent for savers with £25,000 or more, who will be paid 6.6 per cent. Those saving £50,000 or more are paid 7 per cent, while balances of £100,000 or more are paid from a 0.25 per cent rise.

Rates on other accounts, such as the 60-Day Gold, Liquid

Gold and Solid Gold, will rise by up to 0.25 per cent. Liquid Gold will offer a rate of 4 per cent for balances between £500 and £2,500, while Solid Gold will pay 4.3 per cent to those who save more than £500 but less than £5,000. Rates for the 60-day service start at 5.6 per cent for £5,000 and rise to 7.2 per cent for £100,000 or more.

Young savers will also benefit from a 0.25 per cent rise. The Woolwich was one of many to increase rates at the beginning of this month. The changes included a 0.25 per cent rise for the Care Savers Account to 7 per cent on balances of more than £50.

Lloyds, NatWest, Barclays, Northern Rock and Birmingham Midshires also raised rates at the start of December.

SUSAN EMMETT AND CAROLINE MERRELL

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TRUST ME 49

Does a trust really have any advantage?



Gillian Cook: lower pension plan charges are not being passed on to the customers

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has refused to rule out changes to national insurance contributions, prompting speculation that he is preparing to raise contribution levels in the Budget next March.

Such a move would enable Mr Brown to take some heat out of the economy without raising income tax. It would also allow him to allocate extra money for the health service and welfare benefits if the Prime Minister were facing pressure from the Parliamentary Labour Party to increase public spending.

Maurice Fitzpatrick, a senior tax partner with Chantrey Velucotti, the accountants, believes that the increases could mean anyone earning £24,180 might end up paying £210 extra each year, while higher earners could find themselves paying thousands of pounds in extra contributions.

Mr Brown has pledged in the election manifesto not to change basic or higher-rate income tax, and reiterated that pledge this week in the presence of MPs from the Treasury Select Committee. The Labour

Brown stirs up talk of an increase in national insurance

backbencher Charles Clarke asked Mr Brown to rule out the possibility of imposing VAT on essentials such as food, children's clothing and public transport, which he did. However, when pressed to rule out any changes to employer national insurance contributions, Mr Brown said that changes were not ruled out.

■ What you pay. National insurance contributions have to be paid by any employee earning more than £62 a week or £3,224 a year. You pay at 2 per cent on the first £62 of earnings and a further 10 per cent on earnings above this figure, up to the upper earnings limit of £24,180 a year. Employees who earn less than £62 a week pay no national insurance contributions.

■ Potential changes. The Chancellor may decide to raise the basic 10 per cent rate, and every 1 per cent increase above the current figure would cost the Treasury approximately £2.4 billion a year. This compares with putting up the basic rate of income tax, which would raise around £1.8 billion a year.

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■ Earnings limits. An alternative change would be to make contributions payable on earnings above £24,180. For example, someone on a salary

of £30,000 a year would pay an additional £582 if the 10 per cent rate was payable on income above the current earnings limit.

For an employee earning £40,000 a year, the extra cost would be £1,582. Abolishing the upper earnings limit would raise about £3.5 billion per year.

■ Alternatives. Mr Fitzpatrick said another option for the Chancellor is to exclude earnings in a band between £24,180 and £45,000, and then impose a 10 per cent rate on all earnings above £45,000. The higher the Chancellor pitched the level at which contributions kicked in again, the less revenue he would gain.

Mr Fitzpatrick said: "This would be a neat way of answering any calls from the Parliamentary Labour Party to tax the rich a little more, without actually raising income tax."

■ Raising national insurance contributions enables Mr Brown to collect extra revenue without breaking the promises he made before the election."

MARIANNE CURPHEY

Books reviewed by those who do

Starting your own business or becoming self-employed can be a very daunting proposition. There are a certain number of small agencies that help those who are interested in going it alone.

There are also an increasing number of books that give people guidance on how to become a business professional. Emma Bagnall (right), a 32-year-old freelance graphic designer from London, and Ken Wilson, who runs a recruitment business, reviewed six books aimed at helping the self-employed to start their own businesses. The books were determined by leading bookstores, which selected the titles that had the biggest sales.

The two gave a ringing endorsement of approval to the *Lloyds Bank Small Business Guide*. Both gave it a much higher rating than the others.

The *Financial Times — Mastering Enterprise*, although more than twice as expensive, was not so favourably reviewed by our critics. They found it hard to understand, and not particularly suitable for someone just starting up in business.

They also gave a low rating to *The Essence of Small Business*, published by Prentice Hall. Again they criticised the book for being too complicated to understand.

Go-it-Alone, page 54



WEEKEND MONEY

Charges fears for stakeholder pensions plan

The Government's cherished plan to offer low-cost, flexible pensions to the 8.5 million workers on low incomes may be jeopardised by the high administration and commission charges that are still the norm among life companies.

As the Department of Social Security finalises the blueprint for the new stakeholder pensions to be announced next month, *Personal Pension Unit Linked Survey 1997/98*, a report published this week by Bacon & Woodrow, the actuary, reveals that the charges at many insurance companies are not falling to levels that would make retirement saving cost-effective for the low-paid.

In some cases as much as 40 per cent is deducted from contributions, drastically reducing the final payout. Constant censure from both consumer groups and investor watchdogs has done little to cut charges. The Government's aim to reduce welfare payments to the elderly in the next century depends on the success of the stakeholder pension. Ministers have been critical of the high-charge culture in the life industry, citing instances where one pound out of every four contributed to a pension plan is gobbed up in administration charges and commission to salesmen.

Bacon & Woodrow's report coincides with a damning survey showing that charges have allowed life companies to pocket an estimated £500 million in tax relief from two million personal pension plan holders since 1991. These customers, who have either transferred their pensions or let them lapse,

Fees that siphon up to 25% of payments may stifle Labour hopes, says Anne Ashworth

have seen their contributions, tax relief and investment returns wiped out by initial fund charges. Figures from Direct Line, the insurer, which is preparing to enter the pensions market, show that up to two million people, paying an average of £800 a year each into a pension plan, had lost the value of their tax relief.

Bacon & Woodrow points out that companies are not making every attempt to lower their charges. Gillian Cook, a senior consultant at the firm and co-author of the report said: "Personal pension charges dropped when the disclosure rules were introduced in 1995. Fierce competition in the industry was also a factor. But for the past two years companies have not been passing on their own lower expenses to policyholders."

Calculations by the firm show the huge impact of charges on various types of personal pension, with the effect being multiplied if policyholders cease to make payments to their plans. For example, someone contributing £100 a month to a Britannia Life pension over 15 years would lose 13.17 per cent of every premium paid over the period.

The effect of charges levied on group personal pensions,

schemes covering groups of employees at a single organisation, show that anyone paying £100 a month into a Winterthur Life plan for seven years and collecting their pension at the end of 20 years will have lost 24.1 per cent of every premium.

Miss Cook said that, for some policyholders, the charges could be higher, as the Bacon & Woodrow figures were based on a pension arranged through an independent financial adviser receiving a fee rather than commission for his services.

The Bacon & Woodrow survey grades personal pensions first on their investment performance and then on their charging structure. The 27 pension providers that met the rigorous performance criteria were then required to provide information on their charges.

For the second year running Bacon & Woodrow finds that life insurance companies investing personal pension money compare badly with the institutions investing company pension cash. Nine of the life insurance funds in Bacon & Woodrow's top performance quartile have had their management subcontracted to institutional managers.

Paradoxically, top performance may not be accompanied by low charges. In some cases, funds with top quartile investment performance, such as the Prudential MPP Discretionary Fund, are offered by companies with steep charges.

Personal Pension Unit-Linked Survey 1997/98, £50, available from Bacon & Woodrow (0171 357 7171).

TRUE PRU 55

What happened to the man in the suit?



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SATURDAY DECEMBER 20 1997

THE TIMES

WEEKEND

O come, all ye pop pickers

There's no sure fire formula for a Christmas No 1, but every wise man in the record business dreams all year of the miracle hit. Trevor Dann tells what it takes

Deck the halls with boughs of holly, 'tis the season of great folly... For eleven months of every year the music business strives to be cool and stylish, but in December it goes completely Tinky Winky.

Christmas records. Bah! Humbug! Only Alan Partridge really wants to play them on the radio, but tune around the dial today and you can't escape them, even on Radio 1 which has resurrected its Sleighlist (sic) for the first time since 1994.

"So here it is, Merry Christmas." "So this is Christmas and what have you done." "I wish it could be Christmas everyday."

It's the annual miracle of Christmas. The wise men of EMI, Sony, Warners and the rest follow a bright pound sign in the sky which leads them to a large pot of gold. Sales for a Christmas No 1 one can be as much as three times those of a chart-topper during the rest of the year. And with singles sales bouncing back from their early-1990s trough, there are millions of pounds to be made from a successful marketing campaign in December.

So what makes a Christmas No 1? Hardly a soul in the record industry doesn't think he knows. But on the evidence of the past 40 years it's difficult to find a sure-fire formula. It's not true, for instance, that seasonal chart-toppers always have a festive message. Jackie Wilson's re-release of *Reet Petite* (1986), Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall* (1979), the Beatles' *I Feel Fine* (1965) and Conway Twitty's *It's Only Make Believe* (1958) would probably have been hits at any time of the year. But most of the Christmas No 1s do fall into one of three categories.

Sloppy Songs: these are the records with romantic lyrics which strike a sentimental chord during the season of goodwill. Last year it was *2 Become 1* by the Spice Girls. In

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The best outside bet for the Christmas No 1 record has it all: "children, charity and a good chum". *I Am in Love with the World*, by the Chicken Shed Theatre Company, is a tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales

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“**MMM, I QUITE FANCY MANAGING MAN. CITY.**”

NEW LIGHTER CRISPER HOLSTEN PILS AN EASIER WAY TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE.



Talking turkey with Mr Bootiful

MARTIN SPAVER

At 20, Bernard Matthews paid £1 for 20 eggs - now he's worth £70 million, says Rohan Daft

Of the three million turkeys that will find their way to the nation's dining tables this Christmas, one stands out. "It is my personal turkey," Mr Matthews says. "Somebody will have chosen it on my behalf in the past few weeks. It won't have been given any special feed, but it will be a certain size of bird: about 18lb or 19lb."

This makes it a good 7lb heavier than the average Bernard Matthews' turkey. In every way, a heavyweight bird for a heavyweight man.

Mr Matthews has been Britain's Mr Turkey for the past 20 years or more and, with his ruddy, ox-like charm, he is surprisingly regarded on some parts of the Continent as a sex symbol - even at 67.

He started dealing in turkeys part-time when he was 20 to augment his income as an auctioneer's clerk. "I saw 20 turkey eggs for sale, which I purchased for a shilling [5p] each. By coincidence, there was also a small paraffin incubator for sale, which I bought for £1 10s," he says. "I cycled home with the eggs and the incubator on the back of my bike and set up a small hatchery in the garden shed.

"Twelve eggs hatched and after four weeks I had to sell the turkeys to a local farmer because I couldn't afford to feed them any longer. I sold them for 15s each - and that was the foundation of my business."

Local, as if you didn't know from those "bootiful" television advertisements of the front of his Great Witchingham Hall headquarters, is Norfolk. Now, 47 years on and with his East Anglian bairn still splendidly intact, he produces 20 million turkeys a year, grown in sheds of 15,000 each. If the sheds were placed end to end, they would stretch for about 40 miles.

The Matthews empire is built around processing. Nine-tenths of its earnings come from Golden Drummers, Kiefs, Dinosaurs and the like; only a small proportion of his business produces oven-ready turkeys for Christmas.

Mr Matthews was the son of an often out-of-work motor engineer. The youngest of some years of four children, he won a scholarship to Norwich Grammar School and left at 16 to join a firm of auctioneers.

After his initial success in the turkey business, he splashed out £3,000 on Great Witchingham Hall, once the home of an 18th-century man of letters, John Norris, but by then mostly dilapidated, and filled its 35 rooms with turkeys. They were hatched in the dining room, reared in the Jacobean bedrooms and slaughtered in the kitchens.

The Grindings Gibbons carvings had to go to keep the turkeys, "says a friend. "The house was refurbished when things got better."



After his early success, Bernard Matthews bought Great Witchingham Hall, in Norfolk, for £3,000. Turkeys used to be hatched in the dining room, reared in the bedrooms and slaughtered in the kitchens

In 1958, he bought his first disused airfield. The concrete runway was ideally suited for turkey houses - aerodromes were secure and isolated - and he acquired a further five. Instead of producing a big plump bird, he bred a smaller turkey that could fit in the oven - and took the oven-ready market by storm.

Then he set about making the turkey an all-year round non-luxury product. He chopped it up and repackaged the bits, and invented the individual portion, patenting all his products. After this came the turkey roast, involving meat mechanically stripped from the bone.

Turkey became the cheapest form of meat that factory farming could produce - even cheaper than pet food. Many a frozen bird exchanged hands for 29p per pound during a price war in late 1994. The range, the variety and the prices of turkeys were found to be so confusing that one consumer rang the British Turkey Information Service for advice on "how to thaw a fresh turkey". This was hardly surprising given the marketing drive with "fresh", "farm fresh", "fresh frozen", "frozen oven-ready", "frozen with water" and "ready-basted" turkeys in the supermarket.

Mr Matthews takes pride in providing cheap food for the masses. "When I started," he says, "it took the equivalent of two weeks' pay of one of my workers for me to give them enough money to buy a turkey for Christmas. It now takes about one hour. That is how the world has changed."

Much of the increased sales came after Mr Matthews called in Ogilvy & Mather, the advertising agency, which came up with a campaign starring him as a tweed-suited farmer. Sales of some products increased twenty-fold. But Mr Matthews is still shy of the bootiful ads. "I have watching myself on television, hearing myself speak, I find it very embarrassing," he says.

Despite the high profile, his cheery personality has yet to penetrate every dining room. When he went to Buckingham Palace to collect his CBE from the Queen, she asked him which part of the poultry business he was in. "I said, turkeys. She said, 'Where do you come from?' and I replied,

"In France, says a friend, Bernard Matthews is a sex symbol. There they ask, 'Où est Bernard?'

He likes France. "There," says a friend, "Bernard Matthews is a sex symbol. 'Où est Bernard?'" they ask.

He has been separated for

scheme. When Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones were photographed looking grumpy on the Côte d'Azur last summer, they were said to be staying at Mr Matthews' holiday home.

He likes France. "There," says a friend, "Bernard Matthews is a sex symbol. 'Où est Bernard?'" they ask.

He has been separated for

some years from his wife, Joyce, who helped him start the business, but is not divorced. They have three adopted children who, after the split, stayed with Joyce, and Mr Matthews has one other son, Frederick, by a seemingly nameless Dutch woman.

He is a private man, but not without friends. One describes him as a "nice and amiable person, a generous host and a very good cook". He is a true gourmet. Caviare and foie gras are often on the table, even though he still tastes products at his factories most days of the week. He cooks the best lobster - stuns it first and then grills it.

Mr Matthews can afford such tastes. He was ranked 266th in The Sunday Times Rich List 1997, with a personal fortune of £70 million.

The turkeys that have done all of this for him come from one breed, he says. "A white bird, because it's easier to pluck. If you have a bird with black feathers, sometimes a few feathers get left on the skin. It's not so pretty as seeing a bird that looks clean."

But this most famous breed of turkey is sadly bereft of any sort of fancy name. "It's just got a number: it's called a Big 6," he explains. "It's a British bird, bred by a British turkey-breeding company."

BERNARD MATTHEWS'S TURKEY TIPS

- Which turkey is best? "I prefer a white-feathered British bird: it's better for plucking."
- Which is the best part, leg or breast? "Leg, it's a bit more tasty."
- Trimmings? "I have the lot - sausages, chestnut stuffing in the front and sausage meat stuffing with onion and thyme in the back."
- Stuffing? "Don't over-stuff at the back: the bird will take longer to cook."
- Cooking? "Roast with the breast down, so that the juices run into the breast. Turn for the last 15 minutes to brown the breast."
- And what's the best thing to do with any leftovers? "Make a turkey curry."

RARELY BREED TURKEYS



The Northampton Bourbon Red (left), originally bred in America, and one of the last ten pure-bred, colourful Crollwitzes, known as the "Slate and Lavender" turkey

Too overweight even to mate properly

Sally Smith on the welcome return of a really tasty turkey

Like a bosomy dowager on stilts, the modern turkey finds it difficult to keep its balance. The problem is all that white breast meat. The weight piles on in front but, with nothing much to counterbalance it at the rear end - the parson's noses not being in such demand - walking is a trial. So much so, indeed, that the massive bird which graces so many tables at this time of year has probably spent most of its life sitting down.

Nor does the graceless creature even have the consolation of natural mating - now impossible because of the changes to its rear end brought about by the broadening of its body shape.

"Its 'vent' is in a different place," explains Patricia Graham, a breeder of Norfolk Black turkeys. "The breast is back between its legs, and so it can only stomp about, not walk properly."

This "big, round lump", as she describes it, is a world away from the birds which her family has been raising since the last century. Her Norfolk Black turkeys differ little from the lean, athletic, gamy black birds brought back from South America via Spain to

East Anglia in 1492 by Niño Pedro. They were imported to the region because its inhabitants had grown rich on the wool trade. "Records show that by 1555 turkeys were being sold in Suffolk markets," Mrs Graham says. "The bronze turkey came in a little later, brought from Hudson Bay by Sebastian Cabot."

By 1830 Mrs Graham's grandfather, George Peele, and her great-uncle Ernest were rearing Norfolk Blacks on their farm near Wymondham in Norfolk. She has pictures of the old steam-driven dray which carried the rough-plucked birds in barrels up to London for the Christmas market, a round journey of 14 days.

Before that they walked - it was a gentle three-month stroll to Smithfield - gleanings corn from the stubble fields, grass from the roadsides and berries from the hedgerows; and once they reached the table the birds were, of course, tasty and gamey from the exercise.

It was the next generation. Mrs Graham's father Frank, who saved the breed, a founder member of the Norfolk Black Turkey Club, he suffered a devastating loss in

December 1958 when his flock got fowl pest and had to be slaughtered. The following spring he went from farm to smallholding, rounding up as many Norfolk Blacks as he could find. "It was a mish-mash of birds," says Mrs Graham, "but of course they were ideal for breeding because there were so many bloodlines."

As sales started to decline for this old-fashioned variety so Frank Graham's enthusiasm and determination to keep it going increased, intensifying when it was designated a "rare breed" in 1976.

It is from this base that the present flock has grown - handsome, glossy, black-feathered birds selected to give a little more breast meat, although they are still high-breasted like a pheasant.

As sales started to decline for this old-fashioned variety so Frank Graham's enthusiasm and determination to keep it going increased, intensifying when it was designated a "rare breed" in 1976.

When her father died in 1980, she and her mother, Gertrude, kept a nucleus of 40 breeding birds and continued to produce the Christmas turkey for discerning customers from the family farm at Thuxton in Norfolk. Her son, James, inherited the Pele genes and took on his grandfather's business. In 1989, in a change in fashion, people wanted a bird which wouldn't lead to groans of surfeit when it appeared in yet another manifestation on the twelfth day of Christmas.

The business remains small. The birds hatch in May and June and mature slowly. In autumn they forage for acorns and blackberries which add variety to their diet of corn and beans which are grown on the farm, and a little pea straw or "roughage" to aid digestion. The birds are then plucked and hung to develop the taste further.

This kind of rearing means that these birds are more expensive than the faster-growing supermarket variety, but it pays off: by the beginning of December this year almost every Peele bird was spoken for.

Not everyone wants them for the table. One female customer came to buy a Norfolk Black to use as a security guard. Her previous "guard", which used to travel with her in her car, had lived to the ripe old age of 12 and was, she insisted, every bit as effective at warning off intruders as a goose. And, no doubt, just as delicious.



Patricia Graham with a Norfolk Black - a breed that was saved by her father

breast meat than the large white birds that the supermarkets wanted," Mrs Graham says. "The black feathers left little black stubs in the skin which people found off-putting."

When her father died in 1980, she and her mother, Gertrude, kept a nucleus of 40 breeding birds and continued to produce the Christmas turkey for discerning customers from the family farm at Thuxton in Norfolk. Her son, James, inherited the Pele genes and took on his grandfather's business. In 1989, in a change in fashion, people wanted a bird which wouldn't lead to groans of surfeit when it appeared in yet another manifestation on the twelfth day of Christmas.

Solutions and Notes to Listener Crossword No 3439

A Jigsaw Puzzle by Radix

Every jigsaw clue led to a SAW which had to dance a JIG before entry. These saws were all of a kind (i.e. they are cutting in a literal sense) except for EPICRAM (which can be cutting, but only metaphorically).

A: BAND; BAN-D; B: CHAIN; C: CIRCULAR; UL: IN CIRCAR; D: COMPASS; COMPLETE; ASSAULT; E: CROSSCUT; F: EPICRAM; E: PIC-RAM; G: FLOORING; FLOORING; G: HANGING; H: FRAME; RAM IN FE; I: GANG: hidden; K: HACK-

CROSS-CUT; L: HAND; HAN-D; M: KEYHOLE; KEY-HOLE; N: LOG: two meanings; O: PAD; P: PAD; P: PANEL; PAN-EL; Q: PRUNING; RUN-IN in PG; R: RIBBON; BON-RIB; S: RIP; two meanings; T: SCROLL; SC-ROLL; U: SKIP-TOOTH; KIPT in SOOTH; V: STONE; TON in SE; W: SWEEP; S-WEET; X: TREPAN; REP in TAN; Y: TREPINE; anagram; Z: TURNING; anagram.

FURTHER ANSWERS: 1. ENTRAP; PARTNER; reversed; PISTOL; LOT-SIP reversed; 2. HOT; Ho-THERE! OPEN-ARMED; anagram; 3. FANG; hidden; SKULLCAP; SKULL-CAP; 4. PIPAGE; GAF reversed in PIE; ROSSER; anagram of (HORSE) plus R; 5. COCKY; two meanings; SOOTHER; SO-OTHER; 6. GLOBING; GADUS; LOB-IN; THELMA; anagram; 7. ALCAICS; anagram; BRING; BR-I-NG; 8. CHURCH; CH-URCH/IN&L; PREAMP; P-R-E-AMP&Lit; 9. INBORN; hidden; KURGAN; UR in KREMENCHUG plus AN; 10. NORI; IRON reversed; TRINIDAD; composite anagram (I-island); 11. SONGFUL; anagram; WENCH; WEN-CH; 12. PESANTE; PRING; anagram.

Winner: A. Jones, Ilford, Essex. Runners-up: D. Frances Milne, Shipton Mall, Somerton; Bernard Grabowski, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; Roger Naylor, Bradford, West Yorkshire; A & F. Todkill, Swindon, Wiltshire; H.S.M. Massey, Brimsfield, Gloucestershire.

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1	P	I	S	T	O	L	E	N	T	R	A	F
2	H	O	T	O	P	E	N	A	M	E	D	
3	S	K	U	L	L	C	A	P	F	A	G	
4	R	O	S	S	E	R	P	I	P	A	G	
5	C	O	C	K	Y	S	O	O	T	H	E	R
6	T	H	E	L	M	A	G	B	J	I	N	
7	A	L	C	A	I	C	S	B	R	I	N	
8	C	H	U	R	C	H	P	R	E	A	M	
9	K	U	R	G	A	N	I	N	B	O	R	
10	T	R	I	N	I	D	A	D	N	O	R	I
11	W	E	N	C	H	S	O	N	G	F	U	L
12	P	E	S	A	N	T	E	P	R	I	N	G



Christmas cheer: Spice Girls "Ginger" Geri (left), "Scary" Mel B, "Posh" Victoria and ...



... "Baby" Emma (left) and "Sporty" Mel C. Right: Mr Blobby, the pud of Christmas 1993



The old ones: Cliff Richard (left), and white Christmassy Bing Crosby, plus and minus beard

Continued from page 1
1994 it was *Stay Another Day* by East 17. The misfortune did good business in 1992, while Whitney Houston bowed her way through Dolly Parton's *I Will Always Love You*. In 1987, office parties swayed to the Pet Shop Boys' electro version of *Always On My Mind*.

Novelty Songs God save us, merry gentlemen. Here are the songs we never want to hear again — most of us never wanted to hear them in the first place, but somehow they caught the imagination of record buyers. Is any torture worse than three minutes of *Long-Haired Lover* from Liverpool by Little Jimmy Omond (1972), or *Two Little Boys* by Rolf Harris (1969)? Given the choice between *Mr Blobby* (1993) and a molar extraction, who wouldn't choose the dental option?

As for *There's No One Quite Like Grandma* by St Winifred's School Choir (1980), all the appropriate descriptions start with the words "complete load of old..."

New carols: fewer and fewer of these are made each year now that the record companies have realised that phoney Christmas spirit isn't as potent as it used to be. The Seventies was the great decade for sprinkling tinsel on the hi-fi, giving us Slade's *Merry Xmas Everybody* (1973) and Mud's *Lonely This Christmas* (1974), as well as Wizard's *I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every*

Day (No 4 in 1973) and Greg Lake's *I Believe in Father Christmas* (No 2 in 1975), which have become annual turntable hits ever since.

The ubiquitous Cliff Richard has been responsible for two No 1s in this genre, *Mistletoe and Wine* in 1989 and *Saviour's Day* two years later, both fine examples of the kind of quasi-religious schmaltz that would be laughed out of *Top of the Pops* and into *Songs of Praise* at any other time of the year.

Also in this category are the two songs which have twice reached No 1 at Christmas — *Mary's Boy Child*, courtesy of Harry Belafonte (1957) and Boney M (1978), and *Do They Know It's Christmas?* by Band Aid (1984) and Band Aid II (1990).

The importance of the Christmas No 1 is hyped up every year by the national newspapers and the betting chains. They portray it as a battle between competing bands o' singers, but in truth it's a fight between the marketing departments of the leading record companies. As in the trumped-up 1996 chart duel between Oasis and Blur — "won" by Blur because their record was price discounted — the victor will be the company with the best promotion and marketing campaign.

The first thing the promoters need is television and radio exposure. Check your Christmas listings to see how many Spice Girls programmes have

been scheduled, and then ask yourself whether they have anything to plug. Oh look, a movie (opening Boxing Day), an album (*Spice World*, currently No 2) and a contender for No 1 single (*Too Much*). Holding back the single release date to avoid the Telebutties will probably pay off for Virgin Records.

The felt "fake four" themselves may have peaked and they can't use the old "Our real fans are buying the album" excuse, because there isn't one. Yet. But the culmination of a massive television profile and the potential for tantrums from disappointed three-year-olds on December 25 may be enough to keep Telebutties' *Say Eh-Oo* at the top for another teeth-grinding week. The BBC is having a good

Christmas. Even if it's pipped for the big one, it will have had two December No 1s — the Telebutties, which bears the BBC imprimatur but is marketed by the multinational BMG Records group, and the Band Aid-style version of *Perfect Day*, which started life as an advert for the corporation's television music policy and ended up as a charity single benefiting Children in Need.

Christmas is a big time for fund-raising records, so don't be surprised if *Perfect Day* or even Elton John's *Can't Let Go* in the *Wind* climb back up the chart next week.

Which brings us to the best outside bet for the Christmas No 1 this year. It has it all: children, charity and a good chance. *I Am in Love with the World* by the Chicken Shed

care for music at all. Sales are high because many people who buy CDs or tapes as presents never visit a record store at any other time of the year. A much better judgment about the direction modern music is heading can be made in January when the typical

year-round record buyer is back in the shops brandishing the record token or the contents of Santa's envelope, and the record companies are unveiling their new hopes for 1998 and consigning the tired old acts of Christmas '97 to the discount bins.

Everybody remembers the band Slade, but almost hard to believe, their last Christmas hit was way back in 1973 with *Merry Xmas Everybody*



Elvis
and
The Colonel

Elvis Presley (left) had two No 1s — *It's Now or Never* and *Return to Sender*. George Michael awaits a Christmas hit

GEORG JENSEN

Handmade earrings in sterling silver, designed by Harold Nielsen in 1930. The grape motif is a renowned Georg Jensen classic.

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No 1 CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

BAND AID: Do They Know It's Christmas? (1984)
The who's who in pop during the Thatcher era unites behind former saint, Bob Geldof, great melody by Midge Ure.
CRYSTALS: Santa Claus is Coming to Town (1963)
A ferocious wall of sound created by Phil Spector for his classic Christmas album, the only consistently good one ever made.
FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE: I Want an Alien for Christmas (1997)
America's answer to Brit Pop, arty and artful guitar thrashing.
GREEDIES: A Merry Jingle (1979)
Phil Lynott leads this punk romp by an amalgamation of Thin Lizzy and the Sex Pistols.
JOHN & YOKO/PLASTIC ONO BAND: Happy Xmas (War Is Over) (1972)
Still twinkling 25 years on: a Christmas message that never dates.
KEITH RICHARDS: Run Rudolph Run (1979)
Rolling Stone guitarist swaggers through the famous seasonal shuffle: a three-chord masterpiece.
POGUES/KIRSTY MACCOLL: Fairytale of New York (1987)
One of Shane MacGowan's finest lyrics brought to life in a duet with the feisty MacColl — "You scumbag, you maggot..."
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN: Santa Claus Is Coming to Town (1981)
The E Street band live on stage pay tribute to Phil Spector, staying just this side of twee.
U2: Christmas (Baby Please Come Home) (1987)
Another Spector classic, updated for the Special Olympics album; Bono's choral style given full rein.
WAITRESSES: Christmas Wrapping (1981)
From the marvellous Zee Records Xmas album: a genuinely funny and moving tale of life, love and cranberry sauce.

No 1 CHRISTMAS TURKEYS

BEACH BOYS: Little Saint Nick (1963)
The famous sound of sand, bikinis and woodies unsuited to a tale of chimneys, toys and reindeer. Could make a comeback if discovered by the less discriminating snowboarders.
DAVID BOWIE/BING CROSBY: Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy (1977)
Cringingly sentimental duet recorded for a Crosby television show. Gave new meaning to the epithet: "Thin White Duke".
DORA BRYANT: All I Want For Christmas Is a Beatle (1963)
Early cash-in comedy record; might have worked if Dora had been 20 years younger.
THE DAMNED: There Ain't No Santa Claus (1980)
Formerly respectable punk outfit way past their best; doesn't work as comedy or irony either.
CHRIS DE BURGH: A Spaceman Came Travelling (1975)
Gloriously overblown drivel; at least he didn't call it "Gentleman in Red".
QUEEN: Thank God It's Christmas (1984)
Freddie Mercury fights a losing battle with a Christmas pudding of a lyric and a soppy arrangement by Roger Taylor and Brian May.
KENNY ROGERS: Christmas in America (1992)
He clearly believes the Americans invented Christmas; you can't trust people who eat their turkey in November. But he may have been right about who invented the whole shenanigan.
FRANK SIDEBOOM: Oh Blimey, it's Christmas (1985)
Oh blimey, it's crap.
BARBRA STREISAND: Jingle Bells (1967)
Laughable historical version of jolly carol; tries to recreate character of Fanny Bryce but only succeeds in emulating Peter Sellers's reading of *A Hard Day's Night*.
SCREAMING LORD SUTCH: Creepy Christmas Party (1980)
He did better at by-elections.

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Stephen Woodhams decorated Patricia Hodge's house for Christmas. She says: "The effect is stunning. It's like walking into Fairyland"

No shrinking violet

The actress Patricia Hodge goes to town with decorations for a family Christmas, says Michael Cable

Christmas for the actress Patricia Hodge is a gloriously traditional family celebration. The festivities will get under way in earnest on Christmas Eve, when nine members of the family sit down to dinner at her large double-fronted Victorian home in Barnes, south-west London. The festivities will continue until the day after Boxing Day, her youngest son Edward's ninth birthday.

"For someone like me who is deeply sentimental, Christmas is a very special time," she smiles. "It's a time to enjoy your home and bring all the family together. And this house really comes into its own at Christmas."

Helping to create an atmosphere that glows with warmth are the richly decorative trimmings supplied by floral and landscape designer Stephen Woodhams. After training with the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley, Woodhams made his name at the 1994 Chelsea Flower Show. He won the Gold Medal for his "Mr Maidment's Garden" design which featured a derelict greenhouse. Having started his business from a garden shed in Chobham, Surrey, he went on to open the Notting Hill shop six years ago.

For his Christmas designs he has pioneered what Patricia Hodge calls the "hedgerow" look. Many others have copied it," she says, "but he always seems to stay one jump ahead." Winter garlands of evergreens, flowers, miniature

my favourite shop

logs, fir cones and gilded walnuts and chestnuts are draped around mirrors and mantelpieces. Tablescape are created from scented pine, lilies, bundles of cinnamon sticks and tangerines spiked with cloves. Tangled sprays of contorted willow are sprayed gold and hung with baubles, reflecting a soft golden light.

"It's a wonderfully irreverent combination of the natural and the cultivated and it works perfectly," says Miss Hodge. "Because he is basically a landscaper, he sees things in terms of bringing the outside indoors. The effect is a blend of modern and traditional, and that has always been my favourite design style."

Although Miss Hodge has long been an admirer of Woodhams, it wasn't until she moved into her present home that she brought him in to do her Christmas decorations.

"Our previous place was much smaller, and I realised that all my existing decorations would be hopelessly out of proportion," she recalls. "Even so, I would never have dared bring in arrangements on the scale that Stephen created. But the effect was stunning. When he had finished it was like walking into a fairyland."

Depending on how many



The florist and landscape gardener Stephen Woodhams's shop in West London

rooms are involved, Mr Woodhams charges between £500 and £5,000 to design floral decorations for a private house. He keeps Lord Archer's riverside penthouse fragrant with blooms, and has created floral displays for the weddings of the footballer Paul Gascoigne in the socialite heiress Cosima von Bülow's.

Woodhams certainly helps to put her in a festive mood. As a girl growing up in the Lincolnshire hotel that her parents ran, she missed out on the family Christmas she always yearned for.

"My parents would be rushed off their feet trying to organise lunch for 300 guests, so my sister and I didn't see much of them in between opening our stockings at 5.30am and sitting down to

lunch in the hotel dining room at 5pm," says the 31-year-old actress who stars in a forthcoming film, *Jilted Joe*, with James Purefoy and *The Full Monty* star Tom Wilkinson.

This year's get-together will change all that. As well as her husband (the musician Peter Owen), her mother, now 77, and her sister's family, the dinner will include her two children, who were born when she had almost given up hope. She was 42 when she had Alexander and 45 when Edward was born.

"Part of the pleasure of having children is that you can relive your childhood through them — especially at Christmas," she says. "And they are as impressed as any of us by the decorations. They think Stephen Woodhams is a magician."

• Woodhams, 60 Ledbury Road, W11 (0171-233 1411). Mon-Fri 9.30am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm.

BARGAINS

BY DEFINITION designer labels don't come cheap. Unless, that is, you pay a visit to Bicester Village in Oxfordshire. More than 50 brand-name shops jostle for attention in a new New England clippard development, selling end-of-lines and the previous season's stock in a sort of permanent sale.

I took £100 there in an attempt to shrink my three children into a more stylish look. For Barnaby, 5, I bought a chintz Ralph Lauren long-sleeved polo shirt for £19 (£42 normally) and khaki shorts for £17 (reduced from £39). In the Clarks factory shop down the road, we found a pair of docksiders for £15. For Ellie, 8, we headed for Jiggle, where I picked up a dark blue cable-knit jumper (£12.95) and a pair of light blue pumps for £5.

The best find, though, was the bargain basket in Paul Smith, where everything was a tenner. Out came a pair of raw silk slacks for Ellie, and red trousers decorated with bicycles for Hugo, which went



A knock-out, knocked-down outfit

perfectly with a white Benetton T-shirt for £4.

And I still have enough cash to treat myself to a white linen dress in Whistles for £5, reduced, astonishingly, from £55. I reckoned I had saved over £250. Bargain, what?

ARABELLA WARNER

• Value Retail Bicester Village, 50 Purple Drive, Bicester, Oxon OX6 7WD (01869 323 200). Open daily 10am-6pm.

GADGETS

HONEY, I've shrunk the vid! The Gadget of 1997 has to be the JVC GR-DVX2 camcorder, the size of a small box of chocolates with the weight and worth of a bar of real gold.

The camera includes a backlit colour monitor which folds out to make easy work of taking or reviewing footage. It even takes still digital pictures, and everything captured can later be loaded onto the PC for editing and manipulating, or copied to a standard VHS recorder.

The miniaturisation miracle takes slender, 3in-wide plastic video-tape cartridges, which no James Bond would be seen dead carrying. He would probably carry something like a slot-in memory card to record pictures.

The memory card is used to mesmerise effect, however, with the D1000 digital voice recorder from Olympus.

It discreetly slips into the palm, delivers brilliantly clean sound and,



The chocolate-box camera

since there is no moving tape, you can flip your way instantly around your dictated and recordings.

The min-on-the-pillowcase-size cards hold up to 32 minutes of speech.

TIM WAPSHOTT

• GR-DVX2 camcorder, £1,799, from JVC (0181-450 3282).

D1000 digital voice recorder, £249.99, from Olympus (0800 072 0070).

Hardy annuals

PERSONAL ORGANISERS

IT WAS after a couple of horrifying hours spent watching *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer* that I learned the importance of keeping a diary. So shaken was I by this cinematic monstrosity that I walked out leaving my diary under my seat, writes Times diarist Jasper Gerrard.

This sent my life into a spin. One evening I was happily reading at home only to receive a call from a grumpy Labour MP who I had stood up in a bar. Worse followed.

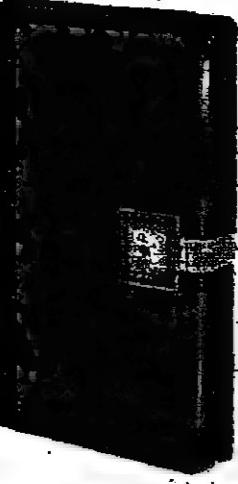
Perched at my desk one lunchtime, I contemplated a drink with an old university friend. Then the phone rang. "Conservative Central Office; here, you are meant

to be addressing our women's meeting. Where are you?"

Along with a glass of champagne, a packet of Nurofen and a thick skin, the most crucial accompaniment of the diarist is, well, a diary. Yet I hate my diary more than anything in the world.

Clinical depression sets in when my diary contains a line of duty lunches stretching into the millennium, with the editor of *Christmas Tree Monthly* and other exciting shakers who nabbed you in a weak moment.

Last week I did what I thought I would never do again: I lost my diary. And I have rarely been happier.



ABOVE: For the glamorous party-planner: black leather pocket-organiser with diamante buckle, £85, from Paul Smith (0171-379 7139)



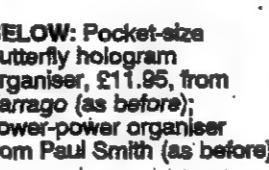
ABOVE: Mulberry's pocket Congo organiser, £120, to keep your social life up to date and the Congo Planner, £245, to hold yearly planners, calculator and credit cards (0171-491 3900)



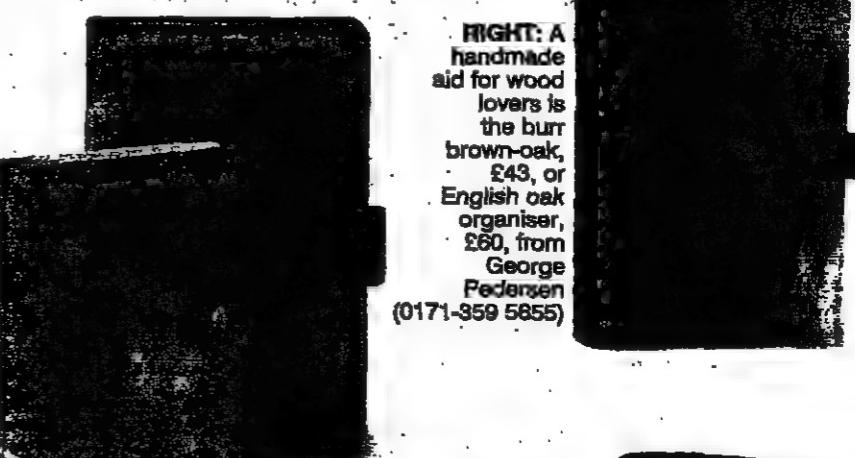
LEFT: Clear solutions are the blue glitter-gel organiser, £9.95, from Bureau (0171-636 3502) and the pink plastic organiser, £19.95, from Ferrago (0181-788 0162)



RIGHT: For the wild at heart: fake tiger and fake leopard organiser, both £6.95 from Bureau (as before); green fake-fur organiser, £7.95, from Ferrago (as before)



BELOW: Pocket-size butterfly hologram organiser, £11.95, from Ferrago (as before); flower-power organiser from Paul Smith (as before)



RIGHT: A handmade aid for wood lovers is the burr brown-oak, £43, or English oak organiser, £60, from George Pedersen (0171-359 5855)



ABOVE: Casio's Digital Diary SF5580, £79.99, combines a telephone directory, expense function, calendar, reminder and calculator, and is small enough to fit in to a pocket or handbag. From Tandy (0500 300666)



PHOTOGRAPHS: DES JENSON STYLING: JENNIFER RÜGGENBERG ABOVE: Calf-skin pocket organiser, £69.95, from Filofax (01444 238100 for stockists). Available in a variety of colours. Alligator-print organiser, in brown, black, red and blue; pocket-size £71.90, larger version, £110.90. From Filofax (as before)

The Boxing Day test

Autumn colour and good outlines are vital for the garden to look good in December, says Nigel Colborn

Ensuring year-round interest, the garden gurus tell us, is the essence of good planting. Easy to say, of course, but how do you achieve that? Could you, for instance, go into your garden at this moment and return with a bunch of flowers? Or falling blooms — it is December, after all — could you come up with some handsome twigs or bright evergreens?

If your answer is yes, then give yourself a gold star; but if not, perhaps you should consider subjecting your plants to what I call the Boxing Day test. Ask yourself how each of the plants in your garden — be they shrubs, herbaceous, trees or whatever — will look on Boxing Day.

Such shrub roses as 'Fritz Nobis' or 'Charles de Mills' are glorious in June, but dreary in winter. They fall the test. The rose 'Arthur Hillier' on the other hand, has pretty pink summer blooms followed by large, shapely hips which look especially beautiful when coated in frost.

Add to that autumn leaf colour and a good winter outline and it is easy to see why it passes the test. These are extreme cases but lots of plants redeem themselves by providing secondary displays, or by extended flowering periods, even though they lack December charm.

Plants with good secondary displays will always score well. The mountain ash, for instance, are mainly grown for their colourful fruits, but are also lovely in blossom. Some, such as *Sorbus sargentiana*, have further charms: vivid red autumn foliage, and big sticky buds for a dramatic outline.

Camellias, too, are variable in their generosity. Some bloom through winter; others restrict their flowering time to spring, but they all have beautiful glossy foliage, and therefore all pass the Boxing Day Test. Indeed, any evergreen is likely to have a strong advantage for winter selection — but then you have to reverse the procedure and ask yourself how it will be in summer. Wonderful though they are when blooming, for example, rhododendrons can be utterly depressing when they drip in an August drizzle, whereas some of the hollies and most of the conifers look fine in rain.

Among more lowly plants, evergreen perennials will always be preferable to those that disappear. The current obsession with hostas is puzzling, when you realise that their foliage is beautiful for less than half a year — if the slugs leave them alone.

Perennials with a long run of flower, even though they may not bloom on Boxing Day, will still score well enough to be welcome. Penstemons, for example, are seldom out of flower during the growing season. Juxtapose them with such winter bloomers as *Euphorbia characias* or



The foliage of the long-lasting hellebore *argutifolius*



Camellia x Williamsii has glossy foliage in winter



The beautiful hellebore *argutifolius* in flower

some of the better helioses, and your display will run non-stop. All helioses pass the Boxing Day Test, but those with beautiful and long-lasting foliage — such as the Cornish *H. argutifolius* or the stinking hellebore *foetidissima* — make better year-round plants. For creeping ground cover, even in dense shade, *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* passes with flying colours.

being in full leaf with buds every Boxing Day.

Even within a restricted plant group, it often pays to select varieties which prolong the season. Take snowdrops — the common species *Gallanthus nivalis* won't open for a week or two yet, but if you were to collect half a dozen special varieties, you could have snowdrops in bloom for six months. In my garden, for example, in late September — autumn-flowering subspecies of the common snowdrop — and make terrific conversation-pieces when used as dinner-table arrangements.

By the time they have faded, in late December, the first blooms of the big Turkish *G. elwesi* begin to open, heralding an exciting procession of snowdroppery, which concludes with a Caucasian species in early March.

In spite of the usefulness of the Boxing Day test, it would be pointless to insist that everything in the garden must pass it. Those two rose varieties I wrote off at the beginning of this piece are cherished: weekend wonders they may be, but our garden is all the richer for them.

However, the rule is to demand from each plant maximum interest for the maximum period. Ask not what you should do for your plants, but what they will do for you, not just in June, when it's plain sailing, but on Boxing Day, when the chips are down.



Berries and rosehips look lovely covered in frost

New technology in the back garden is producing better results and profits

Going organic pays off

The Centre for Alternative Technology is conducting an experiment for gardeners with a sense of failure where compost is concerned. "Often, compost doesn't work properly," says Peter Harper, of the biology department.

The centre's bins have been put on a high-fibre diet, which creates extra carbon and an open texture without as much heat as the traditional heap, so losing less nitrogen, say researchers. It doesn't need turning either.

The fibre comes from waste paper — used tissues and crumpled cereal boxes rather than newspapers — tossed in with vegetable waste produced in the same time so that layering is automatic.

Mr Harper admits that there are two disadvantages: problems with plasticised paper, leaving undigested morsels to be sieved out, and decomposition is slower than in a perfect orthodox heap. But, given that most people fall short of perfection, the method is faster than unurned conventional compost, he says.

Scientists at the centre, based in Powys, are also investigating the use of rock dust to stimulate microbe activity in soil. Its potential was first spotted in an Austrian quarry, where vegetation flourished around the dusty entrance. Although formal tests are incomplete, Mr Harper was impressed by last season's results in his garden.

Other trials at the centre focused on the black plastic sheets used to dry and warm the soil in spring. Researchers found that clear plastic used before and after sowing, leads to earlier emergence, heating the ground by four to five degrees, rather than the one to two achieved with black plastic. Gardeners are advised to remove the plastic once seeds have



The harvest of better composting

germinated and warmer weather arrives.

After using these innovations, you may have a glut of organic produce looking for a good home. The Farmers Market movement, which originated in America, encourages growers to take produce to regular markets with a social and educational, as well as a commercial, purpose. Tony Ambrose of the Bath Organic Group, helped to set up the first British market in September. He says it is an excellent way for gardeners to pass on surpluses and earn money for seeds or allotment rent.

Demand is plentiful for items such as Jerusalem artichokes, Mr Ambrose says,

cent of proceeds from their produce, the rest going towards stall expenses. Customers take organic credentials on trust, because there is no accreditation involved, but they have the advantage of being able to question growers directly.

Next spring, the Soil Association will co-ordinate a conference for organisations hoping to set up markets elsewhere.

Britain's best-known organic gardeners, the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) at Ryton, Coventry, developed several projects this year, some in connection with Local Agenda 21, which encourages organic practice in school grounds and public areas.

The association has also set up a new organic design service. Based on a national network of HDRA members who are qualified garden designers, it will help with anything from a windowbox to a park. The cost depends on complexity, but a design for a garden 60ft by 200ft might be £250-£450.

The HDRA is also hosting potato festival at Ryton Gardens in February, featuring more than 100 of the more disease-resistant varieties. It will be open to members only on Saturday, February 7 (entry free) and to the public on Sunday, February 8 (combined festival/gardens ticket £2.50).

JULIE WEBB

- Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ (01654 702400).
- Soil Association (Alan Chubb, Farmers Market Co-ordinator, 88 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BE (0117 220065)).
- Henry Doubleday Research Association (Bob Sherman, HDRA Consultant, Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry CV8 3LG (0243 302210)).

دعاكم



The vivid foliage and shapely outline of the Japanese maple will give winter colour to any garden

GARDEN PICTURE LIBRARY

FACT FILE

Trees
Prunus sargentii: excellent rounded outline; vivid pink spring blossoms, amid reddish tinged foliage. Superb autumn colour.
Hex aquifolium: 'Madame Briot': a holly with golden leaf margins, often burnished with bronze tints in hard weather. Red berries and good holly leaves.
Sorbus cashmirensis: a modestly sized mountain ash with pink spring blossoms, handsome foliage and large white berries which persist into winter.

Shrubs
Camellia x williamsii: 'Donation': large, double pink flowers produced sporadically through winter, then with a final rush in spring. Lustrous foliage.
Mahonia x wagneri: 'Undulata': one of the finest of the 'Oregon Grapes'. Shiny, evergreen foliage, vivid yellow blooms in spring followed by blue-black summer berries.
Acer palmatum: 'Vilmorin': vine-grown Japanese Maple — but any Japanese maple would do. Shapely in winter and beautiful in autumn.

Climbers
Rosa 'Scarlet Fire': a climbing rose with handsome purplish stems, scarlet blooms, spectacular orange hips. Georgeous associated with:
Vitis vinifera: 'Purpurea': a purple-leaved grape vine with white foliage markings throughout the autumn series of subtle colour changes from May to November. The small glossy black fruits taste so disgusting that even birds shun them.
Lonicera japonica: 'Halliana': Japanese honeysuckle. Not the most spectacular but easily the most sweetly scented. Parchment yellow flowers produced from June to December. The black berries are hardly conspicuous in January, but they do feed the birds.

Perennials
Pulmonaria: 'Lewis Palmer': an evergreen perennial with broad basal leaves splashed with white splashes. In spring and summer, the flowers open with a touch of pink but turn vivid blue.
Cyclamen hederifolium: small, compact but never humble. The pink or white flowers are a joy from August to November. Richly marbled foliage. In an almost infinite variety of shapes and patterns, emerges in October and persists until high summer.

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Angharad Rees loves her home but wants something smaller



Fancy a change of scenery?

The elegant woman who stands in her conservatory kitchen, making me a pot of coffee on a cold December day, seems a far cry from Demelza in *Poldark*, the character that shot her to fame — you remember, the girl who would "drop her knickers for a shilling".

But Angharad Rees still has a breathless, girlish charm, even when the part she is acting is that of an estate agent. For her tall, beautiful house in Battersea, South London, is for sale, and I have come to have a nose around.

She is setting up for a party when I arrive. Shooting for her latest film, *The Wolves of Cromer*, has just ended and cast and crew have been invited. Bottles of wine are chilling in the fridge alongside several enormous trays of ready-to-bake pasta.

The raised ground floor, with bow-window overlooking Battersea Park, seems the perfect space for a party. The walls are what I once heard called Naples yellow and their sunniness lifts the grey day ("It's a spiritual colour in Buddhism," Miss Rees says).

Pictures and bookshelves line the walls (in the hall there is a complete collection of Biggles books); the huge double room, divided by French doors, leads into the kitchen. It all feels very informal: the dining room, which leads out to a lovingly tended if wintry garden, is more formal, with a long table and pale-green walls.

She has two sons, Linford,

Erica Wagner steps into the welcoming home of Angharad Rees, for sale at £1.3m

The garden is ideal for eating al fresco in summer. The hall bookshelves hold a complete Biggles collection

23, and Rhys, 20, from her marriage to *Dynasty* actor Christopher Cazenove (they are now divorced, but he passed his passion for Biggles, and his books, on to his sons). The boys are now at university in Edinburgh and Miss Rees has begun to ramble around in the place — there are six

bedrooms over three floors, plus a separate one-bedroom flat in the basement.

Despite her sons' flight north, evidence of their presence fills the house and is one of the things that gives the place its warm, comfortable atmosphere. Large London houses can be forbidding, but

nor this one: its walls are covered with clues to the actress's career (a fine 19th-century poster from the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, advertises Ellen Wareham in *Lucrezia Borgia*), school photographs and framed children's drawings.

The boys' rooms are at the top of the house and, with their posters for *The Levellers* and *The Cure*, are still very much "boys' rooms". There are books everywhere, records, ancient computers — and the walls need a lick of paint.

Miss Rees hurries me through — these rooms are nothing special, she says —

but while they are not the most finished in the house, they are very welcoming. I sit down at the desk in the attic for a few moments to take some notes and think, "well, I could get used to this".

Downstairs is the master bedroom, with two windows and a balcony overlooking trees and river. The garden is of typical size for London.

Miss Rees has lived here for ten years; her attachment to the place is evident from the way she picks out the pear tree that stands just the other side of the park's fence.

"It blossoms on one day a year, it seems," she says. "And the boys and I always look out

for it and then go and admire it together."

When the leaves are gone, the view is different: you can see the boats passing on the Thames. But in summer, standing on the balcony gives quite a different feel: "You could imagine you were in Monte Carlo or some place exotic," she says. Off the bedroom is a luxurious bathroom with a deep and enticing spa bath.

Coffee in hand, we step downstairs for a look at the flat, which could easily be converted back to be a part of the house again, although it is quite cosy as it is, with decorated hardwood floors designed by Colleen Berry and an old-fashioned cast-iron stove. There is one bedroom with exposed brick walls, high windows overlooking the garden and fitted wardrobes.

If I were Miss Rees, I would be sorry to leave, but she has her eye on a little place in Chelsea which she hopes will prove more manageable. None of her friends want her to go. Seeing the wine and food set out for her party in its easy and graceful surroundings, and imagining the festivities that have gone before, it is easy to sympathise with them.

● Agent: John D. Wood, 0171-223 0174.

Angharad Rees with her *Poldark* co-star Robin Ellis

HOME SWAP

HOUSE PRICES in Kensington, south of Westminster Bridge, within earshot of the Division Bell of the Houses of Parliament, went up 20 per cent in the first six months of this year, according to agents Winkworth. Georgian terraced houses, including those around Clever Square, fetch between £1,000,000 to £400,000 for three to four bedrooms. One-bedroom flats between £65,000 and £120,000 are being snapped up by MPs looking for a London pied à terre outside of the Westminster Road, a three-bedroom Victorian terrace house can be had from £130,000.

London buyers looking for second homes are the driving force on the north Norfolk coast, where prices gained up to 12 per cent this year, say Bidwells. Brick and flint cottages from Blakeney to Hunstanton are sought-after and cost from £80,000 for three bedrooms. Period properties with up to eight bedrooms and five acres of land fetch from £300,000.

So-called "country villages", such as Stoke Holy Cross and Saulsbury, Northgate are popular with Norwich commuters, with prices from £150,000 for a detached three-bedroom character cottage.

The prospect of a Scottish parliament is not deterring English buyers looking for family homes north of the border. They still account for 30 per cent of the market for Scottish country houses, according to Knight Frank. Country houses with up to eight bedrooms and 1.5 acres in Perthshire, costing around £500,000, are in demand, particularly those with shooting or fishing rights.



This three-bedroom Georgian terraced house with a rear garden in St Mary's Gardens, Kensington, south London, is for sale at £269,000 (Winkworth, 0171-587 0680).



For even less (£225,000), you can buy Beechwood House and Old School Cottage, a restored 16th-century four-bedroom village house with an adjoining two-bedroom cottage, in just under an acre of secluded gardens, at Great Hockham, near Thetford, Norfolk (Seaville, 0133-226 5961).



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CHERYL TAYLOR

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

THE TIMES

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CHANGING TIMES

MARKET COMMENT

THE THAMES is a powerful dividing line. To the north, in South Kensington, Chelsea and Fulham, prices rose as dramatically as anywhere in London in the first half of this year: to the south, Battersea has been the beneficiary of the overspill, as would-be Kentishians and Fulhamites have been priced out of the market. Yet experts point out that it is doing Battersea a disservice to regard it as the poor man's South Ken, and an average price rise of around 30 per cent between May 1996 and May 1997 proves their point. Wandsworth has the river, an abundance of parks and commons, shops and restaurants. Admittedly, it has no Tube line, but trains from Clapham Junction take five minutes to Waterloo or Victoria, with the City 40 minutes' journey door-to-door. Frequent bus services take 25 minutes to the West End.

The lack of Tube connections has undoubtedly contributed to markedly lower prices. The agent John D. Wood, which is selling Angharad Rees's house, believes that the £1.3 million property could be compared with those in Glebe Place, Chelsea, where a similar house is for sale for £1.75 million.

HOWEVER the broad architectural range is very different in Battersea. The area distinguishes itself in the yuppie market with a number of classy Victorian school conversions (including The Village, where Viscount Linley was an early purchaser). Buyers can expect to pay £600,000 or £700,000 for a three-bedroom flat, and even one-bedroom units cost £250,000-plus.

One recent resale fetched well over £1 million. New river-view blocks in north Battersea, such as Albert Bridge House or Norman Foster's building, Riverside One, command £500,000 to £2 million. The premium, as for Miss Rees's house, lies in the waterside panorama and proximity to Chelsea.

Further down the market, and in contrast to South Kensington's grand, stucco-fronted properties, the bulk of Battersea's housing stock consists of three or four-bedroom bay-windowed Victorian houses. These are likely to be areas such as Little India (off Battersea Park Road), the Diamond Conservation Area (off Queenstown Road) or the enclave of The Sisters, and cost between £250,000 and £400,000. The only option within Battersea is the enclave of properties around Prince of Wales Drive, from £200,000.

FAITH GLASGOW

DREAM HOMES OF THE ACTRESSES



PRUNELLA SCALES and TIMOTHY WEST, the actors, have a large detached, yellow stucco-fronted Victorian house on the edge of Wandsworth Common in Southwest London. They have lived in the four-storey house, which has a conservatory and garden at the back, for 28 years, but spend most of their weekends on board their 60ft narrowboat moored on the Kennet and Avon canal.



NANCY LAM, the television presenter and owner of Enak, a popular restaurant in Battersea in South London, lives with her husband, Ben, and their dogs, in a small Edwardian semi-detached, modernised house in nearby Tooting.

The house, with a bay-windowed front room and a conservatory and roof terrace at the back, has a large sculptured pond that dominates the rear garden.



LESLEY JOSEPH, the actress, lives in a five-bedroomed Victorian house overlooking Wandsworth Common in Southwest London, with her two children, Elizabeth and Andrew. The redbrick property, with large bay windows, was bought for £450,000 last year after Miss Joseph sold her house, less than a mile away in Clapham. Neighbouring houses are fetching up to £700,000.



pea
SALES

I know Alexander can keep a sulk like this going for days. Perhaps I should send a note'

Merry Christmas Mister Stroppy

So far, in our house, we have not put up any decorations. As children, my sister and I were not allowed by our parents to deck the hall with so much as a shred of tinsel before Christmas Eve, a tradition which, for no particular reason, I seem to be perpetuating. But still, the place has acquired a faintly festive look from the snowstorms of little bits of paper that cover every surface.

Most of these belong to me, and are lists. Under normal circumstances we dance to the music of a couple of lists: Shopping, which has groceries on it, and Other, a great rolling list of everything else. At times of acute stress (holidays, Christmas, whenever we are supposed to be having a jolly time), this great Überlist spawns thousands of panicky baby lists, as I scribble down every random thought that floats into my head. "Xander clothes for school play" says one bit of paper. "String? Sealing wax? NB buy presents..."

Meanwhile, Alexander has also caught the habit of committing every pasting thought to paper, and I keep turning up memos penned by him. Some are of a practical nature: "Sleigh landing pad" reads one, carefully positioned in his bedroom fireplace.

Another announces: "I shall not be at Greenwich at Christmas." "Dash it!" I imagine Father Christmas remarking to his reindeer. "OK, lads, as you were. Turn left and carry on for 50 miles."

Other notes in Alexander's hand, however, are gnomic in the extreme. "Save up as much as you can," instructs one propped on the piano. "Gone to sea in my boat. Back by morning."

Having once fallen into this cast of mind, however, it is terribly hard to shake off. "Though never a competent hostess," I find myself murmuring as I shove a trolley-load of cheap claret around Sainsbury's. "She kept a copious cellar, of modest quality." Her excursions into maternity." I intone, as I draw up outside the house with a clank. "Were vigorous, but largely ineffectual."

But really, it is not very funny. From past experience I know that Alexander can keep a sulk like this going for days. Still, when I get in, there is a further note stuck to my door, illustrated with a drawing of a person in what seems to be a red velvet caftan. Very Miss Selfridge. "Elf in charge," it says. "Merry Christmas, Mummy." Which I take to be, for the time being anyway, a declaration of Christmas truce.

Cheerio, missus. Alexander's precocious

mastery of a manner that would be alarming in a person ten times his age has been noted before now. A friend, the father of sons and a whiz at child-management, once decided that he would get Alexander to eat up all his tea. "Let's see who can finish their boiled eggs first," cried Andrew jovially. "No thank you," said Alexander coldly. "I don't want a race."

I don't know where he gets it from, I am sure. I am still pondering the enigma (and we are still on non-speaks) when there flops through the letterbox a copy of my old college magazine, a monochrome publication whose function it is to record the career, marital and academic successes of college members past and present — and also their passing. This it does in a fashion clear-sighted (not to say dislodging) enough to bring tears to the eyes — affection cannot stand in the way of truth when an old St Cak's girl picks up her pen. (Perhaps it occurs to me, this is where Alexander gets it from, by some process of morphic resonance.)

Anyway, I pick up the phone to his godmother, Jessica, who was educated at an even harder ruck than St Cak's. "What about this?" I say: "As a tutorial partner, she was both stimulating and somewhat daunting."

"Mmm," says Jess. "Anything else?"

"Several did not suffer fools gladly," I say. "One. She was a very sensible person, and a became quite an authority on butterflies." Not a bad bunch, though nothing to match my all-time favourite: "Though never a pretty girl, Betty was not without admirers..."

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LIFE AND SOUL



JANE SHILLING



Female sales assistants with sexy mouths, exits that are hard to find and an absence of clocks are the stores' methods of making you buy, buy, buy

It's in the bag for whom?

Shoppers may think they have a choice, but, says David Bodanis, they are being subtly manipulated

It is the Saturday before Christmas, and you decide to take your family to buy those last few gifts. You think you know roughly what you need, and how much you have to spend — but as you step into the shopping centre, there are invisible forces at work.

We may think we are free spirits who make our own choices but in fact enormous amounts of research and money have gone into manipulating the shopper for the benefit of the shop manager, cajoling us into spending more than we ever intended.

Inside, the seemingly innocuous Muzak is skilfully varied.

It speeds up around 11am and again near 4pm, the times when our biorhythms would otherwise slow us to a natural low. Hard-bitten store managers did not always believe that this would work, until they were shown videos of tired shoppers perking up and scanning the store more actively. Indeed, researchers have shown that cows produce more milk within earshot of a quickening pace.

The family is lured deeper into the store. They quickly lose sense of time, for clocks are banned. It's also going to be hard-to-get out for exits are far away and difficult to find. Faint clouds of ionone mole-

cules — the active chemical in the odour of fresh hay — are likely to emanate from ventilation ducts, making them feel strangely at ease.

There is a delay at the lifts, and the store has to prevent shoppers from getting restless. The simplest solution is to put mirrors on the walls between the elevators, for it is almost compulsive at least to glance at your reflection. (According to one poll, men claimed never to look at themselves in shop windows, but video evidence showed them twice as likely to do so than women.)

The next best thing to keep shoppers happy while they wait is to install an information display near the lift: as many as one in three people are curious, or nervous, enough to stop and check.

Some stores even keep one lift with its doors permanently open. People march in, and although they end up waiting as long as they would have outside, they invariably stay inside than out.

Indeed, at one airport it took two minutes to walk to the carousel where the luggage

arrived, and eight minutes for the luggage to appear. Customers were unhappy, so managers redesigned the path so that it took eight minutes to walk to the carousel. Luggage "magically" arrived a bare two minutes later, and complaints dropped.

At the clothes shop, women happily plunge in while dad is more likely to be spotted video cameras waiting fully inside the entrance. Stores try hard to help men. In expensive boutiques, female sales personnel are often trained to greet buyers with their mouths slightly open — a sexy trick copied from air-hostess manuals.

In medium-price stores, the most over-priced jeans or shirts are often put on large tables near the entry. This wastes valuable space, but only when the psychologically crucial "petting" of the fabrics has taken place is there much chance of a sale.

At all stores, wall displays are designed to appeal in different ways to men and women. Men find it almost impossible to resist a sexy

likely to buy than anywhere else.

When tired, a family will make selections following rules of thumb — almost all of which are wrong. Items that are widely advertised are often felt to be the best, but branded goods often cost 50 per cent more than the same item in a less celebrated container.

The wife reaches for kitchen paper towels — there will be a lot of cooking over Christmas — and instinctively selects the mega-roll, assuming it will be the cheapest. But manufacturers know that consumers reason this way, and regularly take advantage of it. One company made sure that there were fewer pieces of paper on each roll, in its biggest pack, so that the average price per sheet of kitchen towel was actually higher.

Finally, when all the goods are gathered, dad reaches for his store credit card. Stores only receive a profit from those shoppers who accumulate interest charges: big stores often burn through cash banks to find people reputedly slow at paying back debts. As you trot hands full, back to your car, you chuckle quietly to yourself that seems to have gone as planned.

Which is exactly what the storekeeper thinks.

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Satisfying the pining for a real Christmas tree, while whistling *The Holly and the Ivy*, leaves the family cold and silently glum

Less than a week to go to Christmas, and I am about to give my annual romantic yuletide performance. For this I gather my family around me, wrap them warmly in heavy coats and tell them to be brave as we trudge out to chop down the Christmas tree. No matter how mild it might be, and despite the fact that we are going less than 400 yards, I feel obliged to dress as for the Arctic Circle and urge them to do the same; rabbit-fur cap with ear flaps is the preferred headgear. The nearer I can get to the Doctor Zhivago look, the happier I am.

To be truthful, there is another scene which precedes this little melodrama. This is where I hunt for the axe and, file in hand, place the hickory shaft between my knees and attempt to sharpen the hard, steel axe-head. I do this with the concentration of a lumberjack bound for a forest, but the results invariably make a butter knife look lethal by comparison.

The rain forests of the world have nothing to fear from my axe. This is because I attempt the sharpening trick only once a year, and the sure way to learn to sharpen an axe is by doing it

every day for a year until you understand that wood yields only to an axe honed to a suitable shape, too sharp and it sticks, too rounded and it bounces off.

The panicky days before Christmas are not the best time to grasp this subtlety. However, I give the axe a few half-hearted but well intentioned scrapes with the file and then, as custom requires, I swing it over my shoulder and up the hill we march. I am usually whistling *The Holly and the Ivy*. The family are silently glum.

It was with great forethought that our predecessor here filled a corner of a field by planting young Christmas trees. There were only about 20 of them, so they were neither a commercial enterprise requiring management nor sufficiently valuable to guard against thieves. We simply enjoy harvesting one each year, bringing it home and thanking it for the pleasure it has given us before

throwing it on the bonfire, usually around Easter.

It is part of the ritual that I "chop" it down, and here lies the "problem": Does anyone know how to chop down a tree? Is there anyone left with the axe-wielding skills to take chip after chip from the trunk of tree till it falls safely, in the right place? I don't mean a spindly, juvenile fir, but a proper, fully grown tree. I think of this every year at this time as I attack the poor little Christmas tree with the axe. It bounces, it bruises, it splinters, but it does not cut. If the tree yields, it does so out of sympathy. In fact,

most years, I have stumped back to the barn, Christmas spirit evaporating, and fetched a saw.

Once the tree is lying, we grab it by the trunk and drag it home. It is usually too tall to fit in the house, and then begins the argument about whether it is better to prune from the top or slash from the bottom. Then, when you might

think that we had had a bellyful of cold, prickly tradition, we search for more.

The next attack is on the holly tree. Holly is a male symbol, according to rustic lore, and should be brought into the house only by a man. This is a task

that the family are more than happy to delegate to me on the principle that all the prickly elements of Christmas might as well stick together.

Then comes the ivy, the female symbol. This is more of a problem, because ivy is in short supply. There are a few wisps of it creeping up the wall of the stockyard, and in previous years it was considered an unparalleled display of meanness on my part that even at Christmas I was unwilling to part with even a few yards of the stuff. This was, I would say in defence, in a good cause, because shortly after Christmas we would start lambing and there is, according to old wisdom, nothing more refreshing for a newly delivered ewe than a mouthful of ivy. Draping it around the house seemed a waste.

We have no laurel; only yew, which is pretty but lethal to animals, and so I

prefer to keep it in one place. This means that the holly tree comes under considerable attack every year and shows its disgust by falling to fruit. Sterile holly is considered a harbinger of bad luck if brought into the house. It would be even worse luck for the tree if it did fruit, because berried holly attracts a good price and the temptation to sell some might be overwhelming.

However, I fear our traditional start to Christmas may be coming to an end. The problem is that there are insufficient Christmases in the year to use up our trees at the rate they are growing in height. I always fail to remember this in time to offer them to people with very high ceilings, and so they grow and grow. There is one shorter one left for this year, but after that we shall either be looking for a more accommodating home, perhaps along the lines of Chatsworth, or I shall have to offer them to the nation for, say, Trafalgar Square. However, I would warn the nation that they will have to come and cut it down for themselves. This lumberjack is retiring. Merry Christmas.

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

Readers' letters are welcome on subjects of all kinds. Address them to: Paul Heiney, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. They are published on the first Saturday of the month.

Lapping it up in Scotland



Reindeer are back in Scotland after 2,000 years, says Alison Culliford

It is 7.30am and a crowd is already gathering in a Georgian square behind one of London's better-known department stores. "Aren't you a gorgeous thing? Oh, you're so beautiful. Yes, yes, you are," coos an American woman.

The object of her attention shakes his antlers and rolls his eyes. He is Crackie, an eight-year-old reindeer, and he and four comrades are being coaxed into harness by a softly-spoken Scotsman to pull Santa's sleigh. At the same time Anish, a five-month-old calf, has decided to lie down in the road.

A queue of motorists forms patiently behind her, not quite believing what they are seeing. A policeman tentatively pushes the rump of one of the animals in an effort to get past.

"Don't worry, they don't kick," says Tilly Smith, the reindeer's guardian, who is dressed in Eskimo boots and a lake-fur-trimmed jacket. Her husband, Alan, has rejected this attire for the waxed jacket that he wears every day — which is reassuring for the reindeer, who are puzzled by the man in a red coat and a white beard who keeps appearing from nowhere.

Reindeer are surprisingly small, short-necked and compact, with antlers that are extravagantly large for their body size. Their association with Father Christmas was sealed by the American poet Clement C. Moore at the beginning of the last century, when Francis and Dancer, Donner and Blitzen appeared in a poem written for his children, entitled *The Night Before Christmas*. Red-nosed Rudolph wasn't much to do with Christmas at all — the song was written in the Thirties to take a swipe at Prohibition.

Bells jangling, they set off, Santa ho-hoing and the crowd waving. For half an hour Knightsbridge comes to a halt. But the pipe band leading the procession is disappearing into the distance. "Can't you go a bit faster?" a policeman yells at Alan. "No," is his categorical answer.

We turn the corner and suddenly we are surrounded by swirling snowflakes. It is the store's snow machine, but for the children straining over the railings this is a piece of magic, a tantalising glimpse of Christmas with a Santa who may or may not be real, pulled by reindeer which most definitely are. Santa disappears with his sack of presents and the reindeer head back to Lapland... or so the crowd thinks.

In fact they are munching from their feed bags in an underground car park before being loaded into a racehorse lorry and returning to their home in the Cairngorms. For the stars of Santa's Christmas selective appearances around Britain spend the rest of the year happily grazing above the snow line as part of Britain's

FACT FILE

No people on earth are closer to the reindeer than the Lapps or Sami, the denizens of the far north. They are perhaps the last nomadic tribe of Europe and the reindeer feeds, clothes and shelters the Sami and sustains their economy.

On the Path of the Reindeer, which will be screened tomorrow, follows the Arctic wanderers and their herds. The Sami maintain an ethnic difference across the borders of some of the richest regions on earth, Sweden, Finland and Norway. Many now live in houses, and enjoy modern comforts. But the BBC producer Bernard Welsh found Sami in Norway who are still nomadic.

Like all true Sami they do not own land, only semi-wild reindeer, and they constantly move the herds to more promising areas of snow. In the late summer travelling aborigines tour the herds and take meat for the Scandinavian market. The Sami then take the remainder of the herd inland, where the winters are colder but with less snow.

GARETH
HUW DAVIES

On the Path of the Reindeer, tomorrow (Sunday), BBC2, 3.35pm.

Highland life: The Scottish landscape is similar to the reindeer's native habitat. Above, left, feeding time



Highland life: The Scottish landscape is similar to the reindeer's native habitat. Above, left, feeding time

only herd of reindeer. Although reindeer were native to the Highlands thousands of years ago, it took a Sami tribesman from Swedish Lapland to reintroduce them. In the late Forties, Mikel Utsi visited Scotland with his Swedish-American anthropologist wife, Dr Ethel Lindgren, and was struck by the similarity of the landscape to the reindeer territories of Lapland.

In 1953, he brought eight animals over with the intention of introducing a new source of food for postwar Britain. After initial setbacks, the reindeer thrived. A few decades later, he hired Alan, the son of a hill-farmer, as a keeper. Tilly, a zoology graduate, went up there to work, fell in love with Alan and stayed.

When Dr Lindgren died, Tilly and Alan took over the herd, but had to find a way to make the reindeer pay for themselves. Farming them for meat had never taken off, and besides, as Britain's only herd they have an important conservation role to play. Utsi had trained some of the gelded males to pull sleds in the Lapp

tradition, and had allowed a couple of the animals to appear in a film, so the couple built on what he had started.

You only have to see them pulling a sleigh to realise that they are perfectly at home with their role. "Aside from the caribou of North America, all reindeer are domesticated and have been for centuries," explains Tilly. "We train them in a couple of hours."

Back in the Cairngorms, three inches of snow has fallen but the reindeer can deal with it. Their coats are superbly adapted: each hair is hollow

and traps warmth, so they can lie in snow. Their feet are flat like camel's, for walking on snow and digging to get at lichen below, and their noses are furry to protect them from frostbite.

Alan calls them: "Lo-lo, come on now", and from a distance of two miles they trek across the hillside for their meal of maize and sugar beet. Feeding them is a delightful experience. They nuzzle into your hand with their velvety noses and chomp contentedly.

The feeding supplements their diet but it is mainly done

to encourage the reindeer to come down for visitors. They have the run of 6,000 acres of mountain that has the Cairngorms ski resort running through the middle of it. Some greedy reindeer have been known to hang around the car park looking for titbits, and there are always one or two mischievous ones. One was a skirt-flirter: he would go up behind women and lift their skirts with his antlers, knowing that visitors would laugh.

Albert used to biff small children with his foot, given half a chance. Frost loves to jab you in the back with his antlers. "It's not malicious, but he knows how to pick his moment — just when you are on the edge of a stream, he'll send you off balance so you fall in," says Tilly.

The final appearance of the Christmas season takes place in Grantown-on-Spey, a few miles from home, on Christmas Eve. It is a candlelit procession that has been going on since Mikel Utsi's day. It's extra-special because the local people see them as their reindeer," says Tilly. "And for us it is the light at the end of the tunnel. We know we'll be putting our feet up on Christmas Day, and the reindeer will go back to foraging on the hills until next year."

The Cairngorm Reindeer Centre, Cairngorms, Aviemore, Inverness-shire. PH22 1QU.

Bitterns play a bit part

FEATHER REPORT

THES BITTERNS are back in the Lee Valley, just north of London. These secretive herons are now regular winter visitors to a tiny patch of reeds by a lake at Cheshunt, and birdwatchers have been flocking in from all over Britain to get a glimpse of them. There is now a large hide overlooking the reeds, called the "Bittern Watchpoint", and managed by the Lee Valley Park authority. It is open free at weekends, and on weekdays for £1 a day.

But will you see the bittern? That is the question. They are so beautifully camouflaged in the reeds that you can be looking at one a few yards away from you and still not see it. In front, their barred, broken plumage looks just like a tangle of reeds, and as they lean slowly over a fish before stabbing it, the fish can see nothing coming. Above, their plumage is also like a confused pattern of light and shade, but is slightly darker, so that it blends perfectly with the dark tops of the reeds, and is invisible to an enemy such as a marsh harrier overhead.

However, last week I saw one — and possibly two. I was in the hide with some very frustrated birdwatchers, who had been peering through the slots in front of the hide for several hours without seeing a single movement in the reeds, except for coots and moorhens swimming merrily through.

Suddenly a woman said: "It's there!" Anguished murmurs of "Where? Where?" At the edge of the reeds, just by the door! I should explain that there are several channels cut through the reeds, with a floating door in one of them. Suddenly a woman said: "It's there!" Anguished murmurs of "Where? Where?" At the edge of the reeds, just by the door!

I should explain that there are several channels cut through the reeds, with a floating door in one of them. Suddenly a woman said: "It's there!" Anguished murmurs of "Where? Where?" At the edge of the reeds, just by the door!

Information from Lee Valley Park Countyside Centre, Abbey Gardens, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1XQ (01992 713238).

DERWENT MAY

• What's about Birds — look out for visiting Snowy Owl at local gravel pits.

Twitchers — watch for a Laughing Gull at Drift Reservoir, Cornwall; a Pallid Warbler at Ventnor, Isle of Wight; a Ferruginous Duck at Kingsbury Waterpark, Warwickshire. Details from Birdline 0891 700222. Calls cost 40p a minute, cheap rate, 50p at all other times.

PETER BROWN



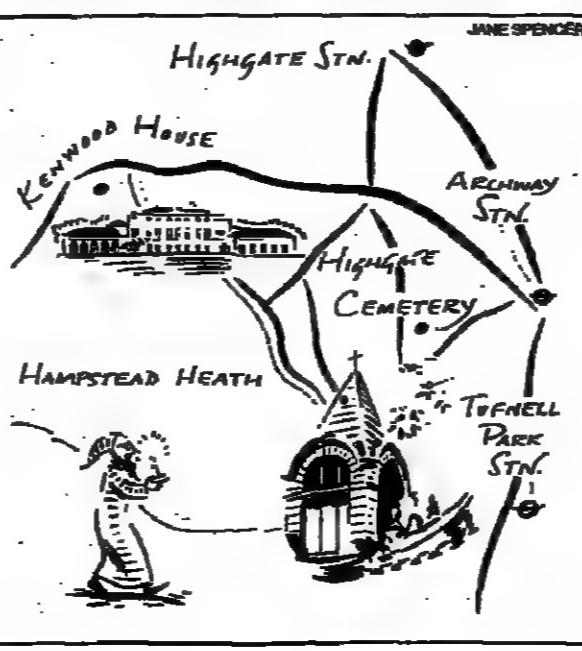
Bittern: an elusive heron easily camouflaged by reeds

ON THE SPOT: HIGHGATE CEMETERY

The Place: the entrance to the Circle of Lebanon. The view ahead lies the majestic Egyptian Avenue leading to the catacombs and in the centre of these, a gigantic 300-year-old cedar tree. Aficionados: tourists and Friends of Highgate Cemetery. The appeal: a step back in time to an enchanting Victorian retreat with ivy-clad tomb stones. Historical interest: the cemetery, which has over 52,000 graves, opened in 1839 — one year after Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. His wife and daughter share a grave here, and Karl Marx is buried here, too. The West Cemetery has a wealth of Grade I or II listed buildings and is now a managed woodland.

Time to visit: open at weekends for guided tours between 11am and 3pm. How to get there: a short walk from Highgate Tube station. OS ref: 283/872 on sheet 176. Also: nearby, Hampstead Heath and 17th-century Kenwood House.

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WEEKEND COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

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CHRISTMAS

Stuff the Turkey Walking Breaks. Take a break in Staffordshire's Peak District with The Old Furnace Walking Holidays of Greendale (01538 703351). Two-day breaks from £75, three days from £110, five days during Christmas from £250.

Skating Workshops. Prepare for the slopes in January with a day at the Calsith Activities Centre, Calshot Spit, Southampton (01703 892077). Price £45 per day, including lunch and equipment.

Fell Walking Weekends in the Lake District. With Mountain Goat and Country-wide Holidays (0161 448 7112), from Grasmere to the remote fells, accommodation and transport included. From £133 per person.

Explore the Smugglers' Paths of Exmoor and Lorna Doone Country. Walking breaks at the Rising Sun Hotel, Lynmouth (01598 751223). Three nights for £375.

including Christmas dinner and Boxing Day buffet.

Christmas Activity Breaks in Wales. White-water rafting, indoor go-karting, mountain biking and guided walks in the Elan and Wye valleys and the Radnor Hills, with Acorn Activities (01432 830083), at Llangollen and Llandrindod Wells. From £200-£375 for three nights.

A Christmas House Party. At the Benslow Music Trust, Hitchin, Herts (01462 459446). From £110-£150 for three nights, inclusive.

The William the Conqueror Walk. Two to three-day, 31-mile walk in Sussex, from Pevensey to Rye via Battle, following the path of William the Conqueror in 1066. Free leaflet with a list of hotels and guest houses available from Tourist Information Centres in Battle (01324 773721) and Rye (01797 226690).

National Trust Christmas Walks. Guided walks from more than 50 NT properties throughout the country. Some

walks are free, others range from £2 to £4.50, including refreshments. Full details from local NT offices or on 0171-222 9251.

Winter Birdwatching. On Strangford Lough, Co Down. Winter is the best time to view migrant birds. Accommodation in NT properties sleeping six, on the Castle Ward estate, from £166 in January to £365 Christmas/New Year. Full details on 01235 791199.

Quad Biking, Tank Driving, Dune Buggy Driving. Other outdoor activities also available on a 500-acre estate on Royal Deeside. From £70 a day, gift vouchers available. Accommodation can be arranged locally. Full details from Tartan Collection Activities (0133 988 3500).

NEW YEAR

Line Dancing. At Higham Hall Residential College, Bassenthwaite Lake, Cockermouth, Cumbria (017687 76276). January 2-4. Instruction from the basics up to the more intricate Western dances.

Guided New Year Walks from the Rothay Garden Hotel, Grasmere, Cumbria (015394 35334). Daily weather forecasts and a choice of routes on Grasmere and Windermere fells. From £225.

New Year Retreat. At the Annerdown Centre, Radstock, near Bath (01761 433709). Start 1998 with a short period of reflection.

Multi-Activity Breaks. Archery, quad biking, clay pigeon shooting, go-karting; all available from The Haycock, Winsford, Peterborough, Cambs (01780 782223). From £110 for two nights. Welsh Border Breaks. Patchwork and rugmaking, bird-watching, china mending, drawing, painting and gardening skills are among the activities on the Welsh Marches of Hereford (01432 830083).

Organic Gardening. Herb Gardens: Food as Medicine.

Art and Medieval History, Aromatherapy, Hereford and Gloucestershire Churches Walking in the Wye Valley. A small selection of the varied courses at Courtfield Manor, Goodrich, Herefordshire (01994 861435). From £85-£100.

Egyptology. Two-day course on the wonders of Ancient Egypt at Burton Manor College, South Wirral (0151-336 5172). Price £98 inclusive.

The Paston Letters: Writers' Venice; the Art and Architecture of the Islamic World. University of Cambridge (01954 210636). January 2-4. Price per course £120, inclusive.

Cabinet Making, Refinishing Antique Furniture, Basic Blacksmithing, Learning to Exploit your Auto Camera. January 2-4 at West Dean College, Chichester, Sussex (01243 811301). Prices £150 residential or £97 non-residential.

Intermediate and Advanced Chess Looking at and Seeing Paintings. January 2-4 at the Wedgwood Memorial College, Barlaston. Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs (01782 372105). Price, all inclusive, £70.

Calling All Pianists, Boxes and Gifts in Fabric, Self-Help and Complementary Therapies. At Knutson Hall Residential College, Irchester, Northants (01933 312104). Price £89.

JANUARY 9-11

Belly Dancing. Learn the basics of this exotic Eastern dance on a weekend course at Burton Manor College, South Wirral, Cheshire (0151-336 5172). Price, all inclusive, £98.

Barber Shop Singing, Winter Landscape Painting, France and England, a Love-Hate Relationship, Writing Magazine Articles. A selection of courses available at Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks (01494 890295); from £159 residential, £69 non-residential.

Writing Romantic Fiction, Chinese Brushwork. At



Even the cleaner wants to be leaner. Fitness instruction this weekend at Lancashire College in Chorley

Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset (01460 52427). From £110, inclusive.

Confidence Building for Women, Video Editing Workshop. Two interesting courses at Higham Hall, Bassenthwaite Lake, Cockermouth, Cumbria (017687 76276). From £112. Exploring Spain; Computing

Skills:

Reflexology. At the Hill Residential Centre, Abergele, South Wales (01495 333777). From £88, inclusive.

Get Fit for the New Year, Calming Techniques and Alternative Therapies, Linoc Printing. At the Lancashire College, Chorley, Lancs (01257 260909). Price per course, £95.

An Italian Weekend; The

Ritual Year; Ancient Egyp-

tian Painting, English Furni-

ture; the Walnut Period,

c.1660-1730. Four varied

courses at the University of

Cambridge; Midingley Hall,

(01954 210636). Price £120.

At the Wansfell College,

Theydon Bois, Essex (01832 813027). Price £85.

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A VET WRITES

Q I put most of our Christmas leftovers out for the birds. But a friend said she had heard that salty foods could be lethal. Is this so?

A Excessive amounts of salt will poison any animal, but it doesn't follow that one salted peanut, a few broken crisps, some bacon rind or a sliver of ham will kill visitors to your bird table.

There is salt in most foods. Bakers put it in bread, cooks salt potatoes and most vegetables. I'm told that pork crackling is crispier if it is oiled and salted.

Avoid lots of highly salted food. Moisten all the food and make sure water is always available (salt poisoning usually occurs when drinking water is in short supply). Anything fit for us is, in moderation, all right for the birds. Fat is excellent — full of energy. And most important of all, keep the bird table well stocked.

Saints come marching in

Who are the greatest saints of all time?

Ruth Gledhill invites readers to nominate their holy heroes

IN THE run-up to Christmas, why not offer up a prayer or two of veneration for the saint whose life is commemorated today? Dominic of Silos, patron saint of captive prisoners and of shepherds, can apparently be invoked in the event of encounters with mad dogs and insects. A shepherd-monk who was born on the day of the last millennium, he lived for 73 years.

His success in praying for a local aristocrat during a difficult pregnancy caused the woman to name her son Dominic, and this boy went on to found the Dominican friars. Dominic of Silos is one of the most popular saints in Spain, and his staff is given to Spanish Queens during their confinements.

Next week's saints include St Servulus, who can be invoked against paralysis; St Thorlac of Iceland; and Adam, the patron saint of gardeners.

But besides the "official" saints of the Roman Catholic church — the men and women who were martyred for their faith, or who are deemed to have lived lives of "heroic virtue" and to whom at least two miracles can be attested — millions of people privately invoke saints of their own. These people were not necessarily Catholics, or even Christians. But they embody a holiness that inspires reverence and provide a focus for the spiritual, moral or political longings of a culture.

Mahatma Gandhi would be one example of such a person, the Princess of Wales another.

The Times is inviting readers to nominate their favourite, most useful, helpful or

important saint. Readers are invited to describe why they are personally drawn to this saint, why they think he or she is important or significant to our times, and why they appreciate the qualities embodied by this saint. These can be described in terms of the saint's morality, holiness, lifestyle, or manner of death in the case of a Christian martyr. Veneration might be expressed through prayer, icons or simply get-togethers with like-minded followers. Times readers of any country and religion are invited to contribute.

The most interesting and enlightening accounts will be drawn into *The Times Book of Saints*, to be published by Cassell for next Christmas. The aim is to gain insight into the spirituality of our culture today.

"The idea of saintliness and what it means to be a saint is very much on the agenda at the moment," says Gillian Paerson,

religious publisher at Cassell. "What was it about Diana, Princess of Wales that caught the spirit of the age? It had nothing to do with institutional religion."

"I might pray to St Anthony to help me find the car keys or I might model myself on Gandhi or Oscar Romero [the outspoken Archbishop of El Salvador, assassinated in 1980] or Mother Teresa."

The first documentary evidence of a saint is in the second-century martyrology, *Martyrpolis*. A graphic description of how Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was burnt at the stake at the age of 85, and where the

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Mahatma Gandhi provided a focus for the spiritual, moral and political longings of Indian culture

Credo
JOHN
HALDANE

aliens, have also been the subject of recent books and films. In an era of apparent non-belief, this may again seem odd. If God and priests have been set aside, how can intermediate parties remain credible? The explanation is simple. The denim-clad angels of Hollywood invention and the strangers of supernatural tales represent, at best, degenerate forms of religious sensibility.

Belief in mysterious beings with magical powers is not an effect of Judeo-Christianity, but a form of superstition which has little, if anything, to do with true religion, the locus of which is God. In their essence Judaism and Christianity are

neither sentimental nor occult. They tell plain tales of wonderful things: of creation, fall, covenant and salvation. Therein lie miracles but not magic. Angels have a place in the narrative, but always as tokens of providence, either as agents of God's word or as witnesses to His glory. Somewhere along the way, however, this reli-

Christmas is for the old, too

Ruth Gledhill visits a young-in-heart old folk's Methodist home



Saintly: Mother Teresa and Diana, Princess of Wales

bishop's followers state their intention of "celebrating the birthday of his martyrdom".

Two millennia later the need for saints has not diminished. This is witnessed by the decision of the authorities at Westminster Abbey to place statues of ten 20th-century martyrs above the Great West Door. To be unveiled next summer, they will include Martin Luther King, the American civil rights campaigner murdered in 1968, and the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred by Nazis in 1945.

According to Lawrence Cunningham, of Florida State University, people look to saints because they provide the model for Christian living appropriate to our age. Writing in *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin), he says: "Christian orthodoxy need not be a controlling factor, as the interest in someone like Mahatma Gandhi amply demonstrates."

• Readers who wish to contribute to *The Times Book of Saints* should write to Ruth Gledhill at The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN or call her on 0171-782 5001. The Times Best Sermons for 1998 and *The Times Book of Prayers* (both Cassell, £9.99) are available from bookshops.

ALL SAINTS

■ Agapita of Avignon: invoked against storms and plagues of vermin. Seven-century French cleric who banished an infestation of rats.

■ Agripina: Patroness invoked against demons, leprosy and storms. Roman maiden who was stripped, scourged and executed by Emperor Valerian in AD262.

■ Gregory the Wonderworker: invoked in times of earthquake and flood. Born circa 213, he preached in Caesarea (modern-day Turkey), working miracles.

■ Including changing the course of a river and raising a man from the dead. ■ Nestor of Bithynia: Invoked against stampeding Ninth-century monk who performed Gregorian chant. His name means "the smiter"; a defect he overcame is music.

■ Vesuvius: invoked against danger from falling. Early martyr who was thrown from a cliff but bounced back until his head was cut off.

ANDREW YATES

DR PAULINE WEBB, aged 70 but looking about 55, used to live in a flat called "The Stables", but left there to go to "The Paddocks". She hopes she might one day move into "The Meadow". It is rare to find an elderly person being so positive about a residential home for the elderly, as *The Meadow* inevitably is. But Dr Webb was referring to an exceptional example of this much-feared genre.

We were there at a service to celebrate the £2 million refurbishment of *The Meadow*, a home run by Methodist Homes for the Aged, which takes local authority referrals.

Christians can be a bleak time for the elderly, particularly in an era when the fashion throughout the churches is to emphasise their "mission to young people and families. Many elderly men and women, already isolated from their families, are today feeling additionally forgotten and neglected by the churches. A survey has disclosed the scarcity of religious services at residential homes.

This home, one of 37 run by Methodist Homes for the Aged, but open to people of all denominations and religions, is an exception to that rule. Built in the gardens of a substantial home once belonging to a London grandee, and to which a church is attached, the home has its own chaplain, the Rev David Mullins, who visits regularly.

The Rev David James, superintendent minister of the London New River circuit, welcomed us with the news that the minister who officiated at his wedding and his ordination was now a resident in the home. "That is one of the examples of the family spirit of Methodism, which is to be found in what is truly a home from home," he said.

• **Methodist Homes for the Aged, Epsom House, Stuart Street, Derby DE1 2EQ (01332 296200).**

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Dr Webb, a former vice-president of the Methodist Conference and a former head of religious broadcasting at the BBC's World Service, chose the text from St John's gospel where the disciples say to Jesus: "Rabbi, where do you live?" He says: "Come and see." Dr Webb said: "Isn't it tantalising that he [John] does not go on to tell us where they went and what the place was like? I would love to read a magazine article describing the room where Jesus lived, like they have with famous people today. We learn so much about a person's personality from the furniture and decor of their home."

The Meadow, she said, was a place of conversation where sometimes the talk became very deep. "As we get older, we do think more profoundly about the meaning of our lives," she said, and described a woman who became indignant on hearing that Jesus said: "In my father's house there are many resting places." Her retort was: "In my last home, they always promised us a mansion."

• **Methodist Homes for the Aged, Epsom House, Stuart Street, Derby DE1 2EQ (01332 296200).**



Dr Pauline Webb: an outstanding preacher

The case for believing in heaven's angels

Christmas is coming and the shops are shining bright.

Although the festival is increasingly secular, there remains an attachment to nativity scenes showing the Holy Family, with shepherds below and angels above. In a few weeks these symbols of the Christian message will have been packed away, and one asks what, if anything, is likely to persist in popular consciousness? Surprisingly, perhaps, the answer may be "the angels".

This decade there has been popular interest in angelic beings. Gift shops and museum stores regularly set aside sections to display angel dairies, candle holders, bookends and so on. It might seem odd that in an age in which orthodox religion has declined, so traditional a feature should attract attention. It is also ironic that so elevated a theme be selected for commerce in decorative fancies. In fact, the concept of "messengers from on high" represented by cherub candies is anything but traditional.

Angels along with space-travelling

aliens, have also been the subject of recent books and films. In an era of apparent non-belief, this may again seem odd. If God and priests have been set aside, how can intermediate parties remain credible? The explanation is simple. The denim-clad angels of Hollywood invention and the strangers of supernatural tales represent, at best, degenerate forms of religious sensibility.

Belief in mysterious beings with magical powers is not an effect of Judeo-Christianity, but a form of superstition which has little, if anything, to do with true religion, the locus of which is God. In their essence Judaism and Christianity are

gious understanding became entangled with superstitions, with the winged beings of Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian cults, Persian genies and Gothic creatures of the night. Cross-fertilisation with Judaeo-Christian thought was bound to produce odd fru-

The implication is not that Christianity should purge itself of belief in angels, but that it should recover its traditional understanding of their place in the scheme of things. Christianity presents a vision of reality as the ordered creation of an almighty God. This appears hierarchical in that we can distinguish inanimate matter from organic life.

• The author is Professor of Philosophy at the University of St Andrews.

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An island for richer and poorer

There's more to Barbados than celebrity-spotting at the smart hotels, says Times Travel Editor Cath Urquhart

As I got up to go to the breakfast buffet at the Sandy Lane Hotel, heads turned. I felt a dozen eyes on me as I dallied by the mountainous bowls of cereal, pondered the tropical fruits and hummed and ha-hed over the eggs.

Could it be that my fetching T-shirt (Marks & Spencer, £10) or Madras-print cotton trousers (Debenhams, £14.99) were exciting comment? Were the onlookers jealous of my orange mules (a market-stall bargain, but perhaps mistaken for Manolo Blahnik)?

No, I concluded, as I returned to my table with heaped plate and my fellow guests quickly looked away, disappointed. The Sandy Lane Hotel is usually chock-full of celebrities, but I was obviously neither Lottery winner, Spice Girl nor starlet.

With Concorde jetting in to Barbados more than 30 times this winter, it is hardly surprising that celebrity-spotting is a popular pastime. The island, 100 miles east of the main Caribbean chain, has always managed to draw the rich and famous — everyone from the Queen, Princess Margaret and Sir Winston Churchill to the Sangters. Pavarotti and Naomi Campbell have graced its shores — and this year it has continued to grab the headlines.

Some of its regular visitors tut-tutted when Spice Girl Emma Bunton took a holiday here; the snobs became positively apoplectic after visits first from Mandy Allwood, who became pregnant with octuplets then Lottery winner and former double-glazing salesman Mark Gardiner, who took friends on a £10,000 holiday to Sandy Lane.

This month Penn Chapman, the 16-year-old Harry schoolboy, escaped from his dorm to live on the island, citing it as the perfect getaway from the stresses of boarding-school life. And in spring the island will attract sporting celebrities and their fans when the England cricket team plays the West Indies here.

For those who want to see and be seen, Sandy Lane is the answer. Here, in winter, you are more than likely to bump into Nigel Dempster over the breakfast rolls, find Michael Winner on the next sunbed or trip over a television star sipping a cocktail in the open-air rotunda. But if, like me, you want to do more in Barbados than appear in your very own daytime soap opera, then hopping in a hired car and pottering about the island's maze of backroads and lanes is the answer.

I headed north on the narrow road that backs the St James coast, where the island's priciest hotels gently jostle for a share of its best beaches. Here on the west coast, the calm waters and picture-postcard sands are a stark contrast to the stormy,



Speightstown is where the real Barbados is to be found, with its brightly painted, green and blue chattel houses and boats, and deserted streets — the residents are all in the local bar

Atlantic-facing shores of the east.

It was not until I reached Speightstown that I found myself back in the real world. At least, it looked like a real Barbadian town: wooden chattel houses painted vivid greens and blues; an improbable large furniture store dominating the main road; an airy church in its west door flung open. But where were all the people?

In the bar, was where. The gloom of the Fisherman's Pub was misleading from outside, but inside the rap-calypso boomed out of the speakers and various hungover men sat around gloomily drinking Banks beer. It was Ham and Dick, the barman, had been on duty since 1.30 the previous afternoon. "I plan to stay up all day, and then go to the calypso competition in Bridgetown tonight, then recover next week," he grinned, pouring me a Banks. Given the stamping of those around me, it would have been insulting to refuse. I downed it on the terrace overlooking Speightstown's pier which, though tatty, would no doubt look like the one in the Bacardi advert after a few more drinks.

Then, more soberly, reminders of the island's slave past: Barbados's wealth came from sugar, and from the sweat of slaves such as Busan and London, two men listed in an 1822 inventory of the plantation's assets. "The most valuable man was worth £165. 'Nanny' was worth nothing as she was obviously very old," said Lt-Col Cave.

He has come up with a fascinating way of reminding visitors of the island's past: for in



The Fisherman's Pub, Speightstown, rarely closes

1980 he discovered ten reels of black and white cine film, shot by his father Lawrence in 1935. Recently he started showing them to visitors in a shed at the back of the house; enthralled, I watched white planters in pith helmets strolling around Bridgetown, drunken labourers staggering out of a bar, horse-drawn buggies trotting by, barrels of molasses being transported by wheelbarrow, everything slightly speeded up in the way of old films.

There was also footage of St Nicholas Abbey. In his commentary, Lt-Col Cave explained how in the 1930s, small boys on the plantation had a great dare: the game was to grab one of the sails of the windmill as it rotated, change grip when it reached

the top, and then jump off as it came back down. One false move, and you could die. Some dare.

Today the local boys dare themselves to surf the Atlantic waves of the east coast. I watched the huge breakers roll in from the terrace of the Kingsley Club, as I lunched on a local speciality, flying fish and creamed corn. "Sophisticated travellers like this," said the Kingsley Club's owner, Loris Arveian, casting an expansive hand around his charming, slightly weather-beaten blue-and-white veranda. "They have seen all the glitter they want. On the west coast you have marble rooms and expensive cafés, but who wants to pay hundreds of dollars for a bedroom? Here, life is not in the hotel, but outside."

Certainly his seven simple rooms, with their fans, cane furniture and wonderful ocean views for £40-£63 a night, are charming. But Mr Arveian is hoping to start work soon on a major redevelopment, adding 32 suites around the grounds, with a swimming pool being built on the site of the present accommodation. I could not help worrying that it would totally change the bohemian atmosphere of the place, although Mr Arveian hopes it will not.

As in much of the Caribbean, choosing the right hotel is important in Barbados because many holidaymakers rarely stray from the pool or nearest beach. Barbados is lucky to combine the luxury hotels of the west coast, the wildness of the east, and the reasonably priced resorts of the south, towns with names such as Worthing and Hastings — but with far better beaches than their English namesakes.

I held up at the Coral Reef Club, a couple of miles north of Sandy Lane, and decided less flashy. It prides itself on its low-key, family atmosphere, and any celebrities that choose it certainly do not want their visit publicised. My days started with a two-minute stroll through the palm trees to the beach, a scrunch of sand between the toes, a splash of salt water, and then a date with some meaningful poached eggs, papaya fruit and coffee.

Complaints? An overenthusiastic maid who tried to break in as I was in the shower; and little on the menu for strict vegetarians, although fish-eaters are well looked after — the papardelle and scallops I tried one evening were divine.

Farther north still comes Cobblers Cove, another up-market, discreet haven, where two-storey blocks of suites are dotted around the kidney-shaped pool overlooking the sea. I dropped in for a Cobblers Cooler with manager Hamish Watson, who sets a wonderful challenge for anyone who can drink five of his legendary rum cocktails in one evening.

The hotel scene in Barbados is shortly to be thrown out of kilter. At the end of April, the Coral Reef Club will close for six months for renovation, and Sandy Lane will close for an 18-month, £37.5 million refurbishment.

There will be new rooms, tennis courts,

swimming pool and spa, improvements to existing rooms and plenty of effort made to keep the staff out of sight: adding service tunnels, for example.

Certainly, it is time for a facelift — there is some decidedly 1970s decor, particularly in the screaming-pink restaurant upstairs; indeed, anyone planning a remake of *Char-*

lie's Angels or *The Saint* should send the location scouts out pronto. But what Sandy Lane's regulars will be pondering is where to go in the meantime.

"I don't think it will make much difference to us, as we have a different clientele," said Mr Watson. "I think they may perhaps consider Malibuna or Cap Juluca on Anguilla, or the K Club on Barbuda."

Richard Williams, managing director of Sandy Lane, reckons his guests might try the villas on the estate surrounding the hotel, or perhaps Mustique, or even Bali or the Maldives. But will they return after such a lengthy closure?

"I am confident that the magical location of Barbados, and the ability to get here on Concorde, will keep them coming," he said. "We will certainly be among the best small resorts in the world."

Well, I suppose he would say that — but I am willing to bet that when Sandy Lane reopens in 1999, there will be just as many famous faces, and as many furtive glances over the breakfast table, as ever.



Concorde pilots at work: the plane cruises at 53,000ft — twice as high as most flights

Supersonic — the only way to fly

"IT'S THE closest you will ever get to space travel," a well-heeled friend told me before I boarded Concorde for the flight from Barbados to Heathrow. He was right. At 53,000ft, peering out of one of Concorde's postcard-sized windows, I saw a breathtaking sight. Below us were clouds — all the clouds, even those stringy cirrus ones that are highest in the sky. Above the clouds was the horizon, a hazy white glow that gently curved, indicating the curvature of the Earth. Above us was the deep, deep blue of space. I was looking at the edge of the Earth.

Travel editors do not often have the chance to hop on to Concorde — honest — and this was my first supersonic flight. I was surprised by the tiny cabin — a narrow, single-aisle capsule with four seats to a row. In front of us was a display giving outside

temperature (down to -62°C), speed (up to 1,340mph, twice the speed of sound) and height (53,000ft is almost twice that reached on an ordinary flight). Funny enough, the service was not as fancy as on some business and first-class sections of subsonic flights — no newspapers, television or free toiletries bag. There was also a distressing lack of recognisable celebrities on board, and although I thought I spotted a reggae star, the stewardesses kept diplomatically quiet.

Soon after dinner — caviare, king prawns, lobster, what you would expect, really — we reached Heathrow. The flight had taken just three hours, 44 minutes, and I disembarked feeling fresh as a daisy — albeit one that has developed a taste for fine wine.

CATH URQUHART

BARBADOS FACTFILE

Cath Urquhart travelled with Elegant Resorts (01244 597999), which in January offers seven nights half-board at the Coral Reef Club from £2,055, seven nights half-board at Cobblers Cove from £2,360, and seven nights B&B at Sandy Lane from £2,360. All prices are per person, based on two sharing a room, and include return economy flights from Heathrow with British Airways (Club World supplements from £630 each way) and private limousine transfers.

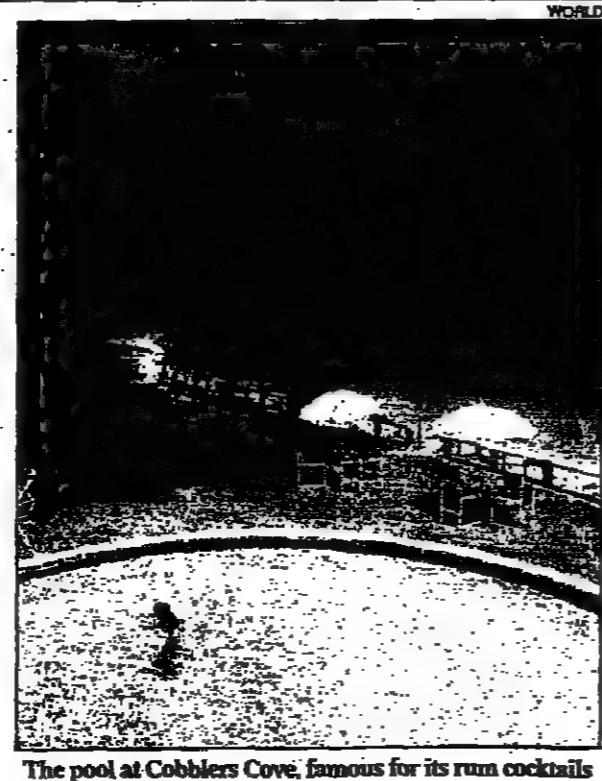
The same holidays with one flight on Concorde cost from £3,870 at Coral Reef, from £3,995 at Cobblers Cove and from £4,330 at Sandy Lane. I recommend taking Concorde on the return journey, because you end your holiday with a short, four-hour flight, and because the outbound Concorde flight gets you to the island before midday so you cannot check into your room immediately.

Restaurant choice: The west coast hotels boast fine restaurants, and elsewhere the island is also becoming known for good food. The Cliff (01264 432192) has a stunning setting overlooking a west coast bay that is inaccessible except from the water: the restaurant is lit by huge wrought-iron flares. Crab and sweet pepper tart (£9) and fillet of red snapper (£17) were deliciously cooked and beautifully presented. The Mews, Second Street, Holes Town (432 1122) has marvellous seafood served on two floors in a pretty courtyard.

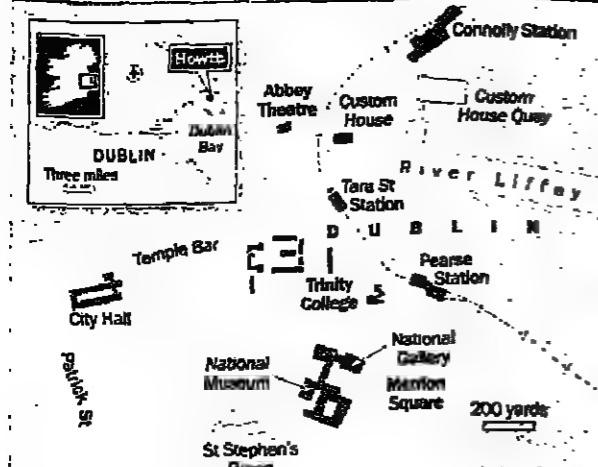
British passport holders do not need a visa for Barbados.

Guidebook choice: *Barbados* (Insight Guides, £13.99) is good on island life and history.

Further information: Barbados Tourism Authority (0171 620 9459).



The pool at Cobblers Cove, famous for its rum cocktails



Old Dublin is looking younger

Edward Marriott dodges the stag-night parties to find the real craic in the buzzing Irish capital

In the centre of Dublin you can hear seagulls cry. And when Ireland's rugby team is playing at Lansdowne Road, the roar of the crowd is audible all over the capital.

This is a small city, accessible on foot. It is cultural, friendly, even cosy, and it is booming: the flights there are cheap, the planes are full, and last year 17 new hotels opened.

It is Dublin's pocket size that makes it the perfect weekend destination, as scores of rowdy stag-nighters have discovered to their delight. But do not let this discourage you: the city is generous enough to accommodate everyone, and varied enough to appeal to theatre-goers, Guinness obsessives, literary groups and hikers alike.

The sights are well-known — Trinity College, George Bernard Shaw's birthplace, the 5th-century AD illuminated *The Book of Kells*. But Dublin is also a living city, and deserves to be viewed as more than just a museum.

On our first morning, our party took the Dart railway train, along with many Dublin families, to the coast at Howth. Twenty-five minutes from the centre of the city, we were tramping gorse-and-heather cliffs, with a view across a beaten-metal sea, clear to Wales.

In undertaking this modest pilgrimage, it turned out, we



The thinking man's pint: Dublin's pubs are the perfect place to reflect on a changing city — and in many it is still possible to escape from the crowds

PICTURES

ist The Edge. In a sense, the classy elegance and understated cool of The Clarence are emblematic of the way Dublin is going.

In a land of hardy clichés, this is one of the most resilient. It is also, as the fast-changing city centre proves, ceasing to be true. Into the heart of town, all along the River Liffey, Ireland's young professionals — people who might once have regarded Dublin as a backwater — are returning.

Georgian houses that remained derelict for years are being converted into apartments, and prices are not far removed from Edinburgh or London: £90,000 is not unusual for a two-bedroom flat.

There is even a new recruitment agency which specialises in persuading Irish professionals working abroad to come home: the top seven managers at The Merrion, Dublin's newest five-star hotel, which opened in October, were all lured back from overseas posts. They are typical: in the past two years more people have returned to Ireland than have left, a net gain of nearly 6,000.

This young, professional buzz to Dublin is best exemplified by Temple Bar, a cobbled, four-block drag just south of the Liffey that has been redeveloped to spectacular effect: previously a strip of decrepit Georgian townhouses, Temple Bar is now a bewilderingly busy pedestrianised hub of galleries, cafés and bars, nightclubs and buskers.

The area is also home to The Clarence hotel, owned by the Dublin businessman Harry Crosbie and two members of U2 — singer Bono and guitar-



Flowers brighten the scene in busy Grafton Street

Unemployment, in some pockets, is as high as 30 per cent. It is on the dark housing estates that taxi drivers are frequently held up — not at gunpoint, but with blood-filled syringes. Last year there were more than 2,200 reported syringe attacks in the capital, an average of six a day.

Visitors should be aware, but not discouraged: the closest you are likely to come to such experiences on the average weekend is hearing stories

from your taxi driver, as we did. To be fair to Dublin, such tales could apply to any European capital.

Where Dublin gains over its rivals is that here, unlike elsewhere, it is still possible to escape the crowds. In bars such as Ryans, which looks across the Liffey to the Guinness brewery, you could be in rural Co Galway, not in the heart of an otherwise busy

city. We retreated here from a squall one lunchtime and ate lamb stew and vegetable soup and drank Guinness in our own "snug", a partition secure from the rest of the pub.

"Where you comin' from?" asked the barman, dressed in the same black-and-white livery waiters which have worn here since 1905. "London," I replied. "Poor you," he answered, with genuine pity.

DUBLIN: TRAVELLERS' FACT FILE

■ Edward Marriott travelled with Aer Lingus (0645 737747), whose fares from Heathrow start at £92. British Airways (022110) fares start at £89 from Gatwick. Ryanair (0841 569569) fares start at £69 from Stansted, Luton, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol, Cardiff, Prestwick and Bournemouth; £79 from Gatwick. All prices include taxes; a Saturday night stay must be included.

■ Taxi fares are not far off London prices. From the airport to centre of Dublin costs £16 (£15, including a 10 per cent tip).

■ Edward Marriott stayed at The Merrion hotel, Upper Merrion Street (reservations 0800 181535, website: www.merrionhotel.ie), which opened in October and is the newest five-star hotel in the city. It has been created from four Grade I listed Georgian townhouses and backs on to two privately developed 18th-century gardens, to which guests have access. The 145 rooms and suites have been designed in sympathy with the original Georgian architecture. Until January 11, a double room costs from £209.99; thereafter from £189 a night, room only.

■ At the end of the night, we put our heads round a door. "Come in, don't be shy," someone shouted from the back. "These guys are really good, you know." And so we did, and so they were.

After all this, there remain the museums, the galleries, and the city's cultural life, not least the Abbey Theatre, which regularly launches new work by Ireland's playwrights.

A day or so, too, could easily be spent wandering the Georgian squares. In Merrion Square, perhaps the finest of all, almost every building has a plaque commemorating the famous — poets, sculptors or political activists, as well as a late-vintage W.B. Yeats and a senator, all of whom had houses here.

Samuel Johnson, who had a put down for almost everything, judged Dublin, in 1791, to be "a place much worse than London". Should he be looking down on the city 200 years later, he might just be persuaded to change his mind.

■ Tour operator: British Airways Holidays (01293 723100) has two-night breaks at the Stakis Hotel starting at £185pp, including flights and transfers. Travelscene (0181 427 4445) has two nights at the Mount Herbert hotel starting at £165, including flights and breakfast. Crystal (01235 824324) starts at £149 for two nights at the Castle Hotel. Including flights and breakfast, and Time Off (0990 846363) offers two nights guest-house accommodation, with breakfast, from £167.

■ Bars: Ryans Pub & Restaurant (077 6097), 38 Parkgate Street; lunch costs £5-10, five-course dinner, £20. O'Shea's Merchant (079 6795 12 Lower Bridge Street; Oliver St John Gogarty (071 1179), Temple Bar.

■ Culture: Irish Writers Museum (072 2077), 19 Parnell Square. National Museum of Ireland (077 7444), Kildare Street and Merrion Street. National Gallery of Ireland (061 5133), Merrion Square.

■ Reading: Dublin (Lonely Planet, £6.99) is the best guide. Dubliners by James Joyce (Penguin Classics, £4.99). James Joyce Reader (Penguin Classics, £7.99). All Roddy Doyle's novels — *The Commitments*, *The Van*, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, *The Snapper* — are set in and around Dublin and published by Minerva at £5.99.

■ Further information: Irish Tourist Board (0171 493 3201).



A bathroom at The Merrion, with a view of Parliament



Typical Georgian houses

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WORD WATCHING: ANSWERS

Answers from page 22

KANKEDORT
(c) Kankedort means a state of suspense, a critical position, an awkward affair.

MUINEIRA
(c) Muineira is a type of Spanish

dance and song that is performed in six-in-a-measure time. It is popular in Galicia and is also known as the Gallegada.

VIOLON D'INGRES
(a) Violon d'Ingres is an occasional pastime. It is also an activity other than that for which one is well known or at which one excels. For example, the artist Ingres took time off from his paints to fiddle.

LIMBATION
(a) The formation of a border. Also a border distinguished by colour or structure.

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Swedes bitten by the culture bug

TONY STONE

Tony Kelly explores Stockholm as it gears up to be the European Cultural Capital of 1998

A glorious display of cultural fireworks will burst over the Swedish capital on New Year's Eve — Japanese dancers, festivals of tango and new European film, the Bolshoi Ballet performing Glazunov, the Berlin Philharmonic playing Verdi. All are lined up to help Stockholm celebrate its turn under the spotlight as the 1998 Cultural Capital of Europe.

The five-storey Kulturhuset on Stockholm's Sergels Torg will be turned into a giant dance palace for the last night of the year. By January 18, when the official opening takes place, the city's central meeting point, the Kungsträdgården, will have been transformed into an ice cathedral.

Later in the year there will be art in shop windows and photography on the Metro, festivals of percussion, juggling and chamber music, children's architecture, a puppet festival, and the European fire sculpture championships. Previous Cultural Capitals, such as Glasgow in 1990 and Thessaloniki this year, used the opportunity to make a showcase of their national and regional culture, but Stockholm seems to be denying there is any such thing (a recent edition of *Stockholm '98*, entitled *What is Swedish Culture?*, also failed to supply many answers).

Admittedly, the cultural year programme does include a Strindberg festival and seven new Swedish operas, along with a heavy concentration on Swedish design. But a glance through the festival listings reinforces the impression that the world will be coming to Sweden rather than Sweden showing itself off to the world.

A new Modern Art Museum, designed by the Spanish architect Rafael Moneo, and blasted out of the granite on the island of Skeppsholmen, will open in February. The museum's British director, David Elliot, has put together an opening exhibition featuring Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread and Francis Bacon. Later in the year, there will be a substantial Joan Miró retrospective. Not many Swedish names there.

It is all rather like last week's Jamboree in the City Hall, when the world's great and good gathered for the Nobel prize-winners' banquet in a 1920s building modelled on a Venetian palazzo.

Stockholm is so good at absorbing outside cultural influences, you wonder whether it has a cultural life of its own. The answer, of course, is yes: Stockholm has more museums, theatres and art galleries than just about any city of comparable size. But how much of what they put on is particularly Swedish? Perhaps it is unfair to ask.

"The history of our culture is multinational," says Jan Sandqvist, who, when he is not acting as press officer for Stockholm '98, plays tuba in a



The Swedish capital is built on 14 islands and, although bridges and Metro links mean you never have to take a ferry, you cannot escape the city's connections with the water

DIARY OF EVENTS IN THE CAPITAL OF CULTURE '98

Jan 18-Feb 18: Ice Cathedral, Kungsträdgården — exhibition on the theme of snow and ice sculpture.
Feb 6: Sami (Lapp) National Day: Lapp banquet followed by a concert of flamenco and folk chanting.
Feb 14: Opening of Modern Art Museum and Museum of Architecture.
Mar 14: Mahler Marathon — 18 pianists play all Mahler's symphonies.

May 1: Berlin Philharmonic, Vasa Museum — Verdi and Beethoven performed in front of the 17th-century man-of-war Vasa, a 62m-long ship which sank on launching in 1628 and was raised in 1961.
May 9-Aug 30: Miró exhibition, Modern Art Museum.
May 23-Aug 30: Maritime Culture '98: a celebration of Sweden's maritime history on the island of Djurgården.
May 30-Jun 7: Tango Festival, with artists from Uruguay, Argentina and Sweden.



Jues 8-Sept 1: Gluck season, Drottningholm Court Theatre — *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Alceste*, *Paris* and *Helena* (stage concert performance) and the ballet *Don Juan*.
Aug 6-12: Peter Brook directs the opera *Don Giovanni*.
Aug 22-Sept 12: Strindberg Festival — plays by Sweden's greatest dramatist at the Strindberg Theatre and Stockholm Cathedral.
Sept 6: Under/Exposed — photography takes the place of advertisements on the Metro for a month.
Oct 7-17: Poetry Olympics — poetry reading competition, judged by the audience.
Oct 24-Nov 25: *Princess and the Moon* — a new children's opera by Jonas Forssell.
Nov 3-8: Electronic music festival.
Nov 25-28: European Fire Sculpture Championships.

For a free 30-page brochure detailing the entire programme for the Cultural Capital Year '98, call 01467 578511.

In fact, at times, Stockholm feels more like a succession of villages. The city is built on water — or rather on 14 islands, each with its own personality. Most visitors head for Gamla Stan (Old Town), a maze of medieval buildings and cobbled streets around the cathedral. They also wander around neighbouring Skeppsholmen on a human scale."

Bridges and Metro links mean you never have to take a ferry these days, but you cannot escape the city's connection with the water. Outside the royal palace, where the Baltic meets Lake Mälaren, locals fish for salmon. Boats depart the city centre for Helsinki and for the islands of the archipelago, where every other Stockholmer seems to have a summer house.

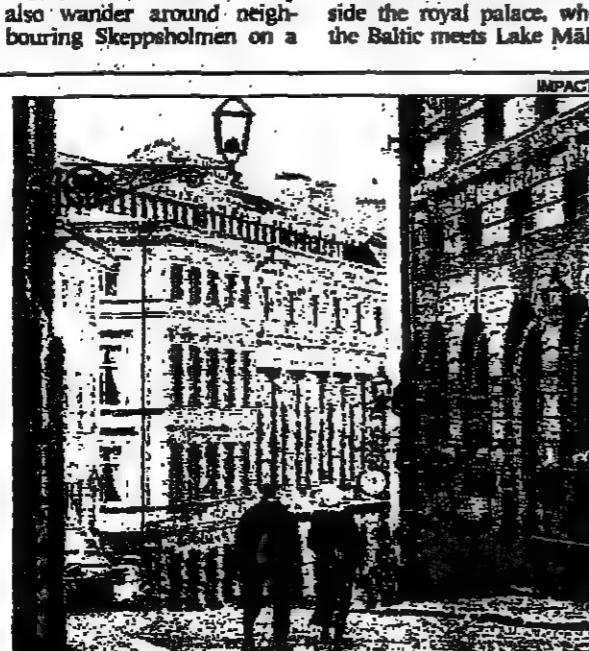
I boarded a boat for Drottningholm, King Carl Gustaf's residence, seven miles west of the city. I tucked into raw herrings and schnaps as the boat glided through the suburbs, passing wooden houses by the water's edge and islands glowing with russet and gold. Once at the palace, I headed for the Royal Court Theatre, built in 1766 and still using its original stage machinery. The candles which once lit the stage have been replaced by ingeniously flickering electric lights.

With the strength of the pound, Sweden is surprisingly affordable. Fly from Stansted to the renamed Stockholm South (Självsta) airport, 60 miles out of town, and you can pay only £99 return. Stay in a B&B and you can have a city-centre room, with a breakfast of ham, eggs and cheese, for under £30. My hosts, Lars and Ingrid Söderstrom, had a flat on Olof Palme Street, yards from where the former prime minister was murdered in 1986. A short walk took me to his grave at Adolf Fredriks church.

Museums choice: Music Museum, Sibyllegatan 2, open 11am-4pm daily (except Mon). Vasa Museum, Djurgården, open 9.30am-7pm daily in summer, 10am-5pm in winter.

Restaurants choice: Hannas Krog, Skanegatan 80 (063 8225), young and trendy; main dishes about £10-£15. Hermitage, Stora Nygatan 11 (411 9500), vegetarian cafe in the old town, popular at lunchtime, generous daily menu £5.

Guidebook choice: Swedes: The Rough Guide (£10.99).



Gamla Stan: medieval buildings and cobbled streets

Norrvista (0171-409 7334) offers two nights in the four-star Scandic Hotel Continental for £248, flying from Gatwick with Finnair and based on two sharing. Valid until the end of April.

When to go: winters are long and cold, so unless you are going for the Cultural Capital activities the best time is May to October.

Getting around: the Stockholm Card (from tourist offices) costs Kr185 (£15) for 24 hours, Kr500 for 48. It gives free entry to museums and unlimited use of public transport for one adult and two children.

en, locals fish for salmon. Boats depart the city centre for Helsinki and for the islands of the archipelago, where every other Stockholmer seems to have a summer house.

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Jues 8-Sept 1: Gluck season, Drottningholm Court Theatre — *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Alceste*, *Paris* and *Helena* (stage concert performance) and the ballet *Don Juan*.

Aug 6-12: Peter Brook directs the opera *Don Giovanni*.
Aug 22-Sept 12: Strindberg Festival — plays by Sweden's greatest dramatist at the Strindberg Theatre and Stockholm Cathedral.

Sept 6: Under/Exposed — photography takes the place of advertisements on the Metro for a month.

Oct 7-17: Poetry Olympics — poetry reading competition, judged by the audience.

Oct 24-Nov 25: *Princess and the Moon* — a new children's opera by Jonas Forssell.

Nov 3-8: Electronic music festival.

Nov 25-28: European Fire Sculpture Championships.

For a free 30-page brochure detailing the entire programme for the Cultural Capital Year '98, call 01467 578511.

PACK YOUR BAGS



IT IS still possible to spend Christmas with the Angels at the Angel Hotel (01730 812421) at Midhurst in Sussex. The hotel is offering a three-night package for £347.50 per person, based on two sharing. The price includes breakfast, champagne reception and dinner on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day drinks and lunch, Boxing Day lunch, reception and dinner.

A TRADITIONAL Christmas is on offer at the Rookery Hall Hotel (01270 610016), Chester, from Tuesday. Celebrations include welcome tea and cocktails, candlelit dinners, transport to midnight Mass, Christmas feast, horse and carriage ride on Boxing Day and afternoon classes for the Victorian gala dinner dance. Three nights from £355 per person.

PULL MORE than just a cracker this Yuletide! Solo's Holidays (0181-951 2800) is offering a special Christmas break for singles aged between 20 and 50. From Tuesday, three nights' half-board at the Swallow Royal Hotel, Bath, is from £395 per person, including a cabaret dinner dance and visit to the city.

HELPFUL Holidays, which specialises in self-careing in the West Country, still has a selection of large country properties — some sleeping up to eight people — available over Christmas. One, at St Cleer, near Liskeard, with an indoor swimming pool, costs £1,175 for a week. Details on 01647 433993.

START your new year's resolutions in a far-off land, discoverinitiatives (0171-229 9881) still has availability on its 14-night trip to Vietnam. Led by expert guides, visiting temples, beaches and national parks and staying in local guest houses, the trip costs £1,975 per person, and flights cost from £545 per person. Departs January 2.

KUMUKA (0171-937 8855) has reduced its Zimbabwe

FLYING VISITS

Departure: Monday December 22 to Saturday December 27, 1997 Lowest available published fares for return travel.

London - Amsterdam	from £55 easyJet (ex-Luton)	£199 Transavia (ex-Gatwick)
London - Berlin	£99 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)	£398 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)
London - Berlin	from £74 JEA (ex-Stansted/Gatwick)	From £136 JEA (ex-Stansted/Gatwick)
Manchester - Cork	from £135 BA	£264 BA
London - Glasgow	from £58 easyJet (ex-Luton)	£198 BA (ex-Heathrow/Gatwick)
London - London	£114 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)	£398 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)
London - Malta	£207 BA (ex-Gatwick)	£304 BA (ex-Gatwick)
London - New York	from £297 Icelandair (ex-Gatwick)	£844 BA (ex-Heathrow/Gatwick)
London - Palma	from £266 easyJet (ex-Luton)	£248 British Midland (ex-Heathrow)
Birmingham - Paris	£110 BA	£321 BA

Airline telephone numbers

AB Airlines 0345 464748
British Airways 0345 222111
easyJet 0990 292929
British Midland 0345 554554

Indonesia 0173-388 5599

JEA 0590 676676

Transavia 03293 596650

Notes

* non-stop flights except where indicated.

** Prices shown in the left-hand column are the lowest published excursion fares.

Prices shown in the right-hand column are the lowest available flexible fares which do not require a Saturday night stay and which, in many cases, allow changes or cancellation without penalty. In all cases you are advised to check the restrictions, if any, when booking.

† Airfares are not guaranteed.

‡ Fares do not include any applicable taxes or security fees.

Botswana safari from £645 to £905 per person. Departing from Harare on January 4, the 14-day trip includes horseback and walking safaris, visits to the Okavango Delta and ends at Victoria Falls. The price includes all transport, meals and accommodation but not flights. Air Zimbabwe (0171-491 0009) has a return flight from Heathrow to Harare, including internal flight from Victoria Falls to Harare, for £594 (plus £20 tax).

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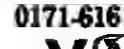
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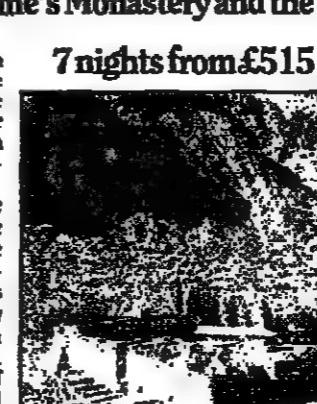
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In Whistler/Blackcomb, in Canada, major runs were open last week and there was off-piste skiing — mainly around rocks and tree stumps. El Niño could improve matters

The perils of snowbusiness

America is praying for El Niño — the weather phenomenon which is likely to bring snow and glorious skiing. Graham Duffill reports

On the message board at the base of the River Run gondola at Keystone, Colorado, some wag has written: "El Niño, where are you?" It is not yet a plea from the heart — North America already has enough snow to get its season under way — but one that could soon echo around the Rockies.

El Niño (The Boy), is the name given to the weather phenomenon caused by the unusual warming of the eastern Pacific Ocean. One of its effects can be huge snowfalls over the southern part of the Rockies from now until March. However, it can also change the jet stream pattern that normally comes from the north, giving the northern states of America and Canada a snow famine and warmer winters.

The last big El Niño winter was 1982/83, when lift towers were buried and 78 inches of snow was recorded on Carson Pass near Kirkwood, California. Based on rainfall so far this time round, some meteorologists are predicting that this El Niño could be as strong, but most agree it will affect the ski season.

The ski resorts that may benefit are Taos in New Mexico, and Telluride, Purgatory and possibly Aspen in southern Colorado. If the storms push further north, Breckenridge, Vail and Steamboat Springs will receive a few extra feet. Lake Tahoe, Heavenly Valley and Mammoth in northern California are on the



El Niño usually brings extra snow to Breckenridge, Colorado. In 1982 it brought 778 inches to a Californian resort

edge, but have so far received only two major snowfalls.

What North America cannot escape is that there has been significantly less snow at the start of this season than the

last two, which were exceptionally good.

In Whistler/Blackcomb on the west coast of Canada, most major runs were open last week. With a new snowfall,

off-piste skiing was possible, although it was an adventurous trip around rocks and tree stumps.

Unlike Europe, where warm weather can blight the

Alps, temperatures in North America are generally low enough from November to allow intensive snow-making. The machines at Whistler and Blackcomb mountains, which

together form the largest ski area in North America and share one lift-pass for the first time this winter, have been blowing day and night.

The top runs are well covered, but the final descent to the base on the bottom third of the mountain is still rocky and treacherous. Lake Louise and Banff are in a similar condition — good enough for piste skiers to enjoy the slopes, but not a vintage year so far.

El Niño's warming effects may also have begun, as the days have been as warm as zero centigrade on the top of the mountain and minus five at night.

In Breckenridge, Colorado, the most popular destination for British skiers in America, all major runs are open and flawlessly created, thanks to creative piste making and tonnes of man-made snow.

James Shingles, who runs three chalets for British skiers in Breckenridge, said: "The good thing about this place is that, even if you get grumpy guests for whom nothing is right, they can always ski and are happy with it."

Officially, Colorado's snowfall is average for this time of the year, with 35 inches at the top at Breckenridge and 28 at the bottom. Off-piste skiing is just about possible but requires care to avoid rocks.

Bill Jensen, who runs the resort, thinks the El Niño phenomenon could be over-hyped. "Ignore it and go where you want to go would be my advice," he said.

—

With skiers gearing up for the first holiday of the season, it is time to get up to speed on this winter's techniques and terminology, writes Doug Stager.

Simply being seen on skis, for example, as opposed to a snowboard, immediately dates one as being born in the 1960s or even earlier.

Couloir cowboys who like to refer to themselves as "extreme" skiers should note that this term has been officially retired. Last summer the world's top daredevils and stunt skiers formed a new group, the International Free Skiers' Association, heaping scorn on the word "extreme" and declaring themselves "free" skiers.

"Free" skiers, so it goes, imaginatively express themselves with flashy jumps and stylish tricks, while "extreme" skiers merely bomb down very steep slopes.

Skiers with any pretence to off-piste cred this season will need to equip themselves with a specially designed rucksack, with pockets for avalanche probe, shovel and first-aid kit. An avalanche transceiver is both common sense and essential for your safety.

Crucial in distinguishing the proficient off-piste skier from the on-piste punter, is never inserting hands in pole straps. Off-piste skiers must be ready to discard both poles at the first sign of avalanche, or risk being pulled under the snow.

In fireside après-ski conver-



Breckenridge, currently flavour of the month among British skiers

High life at high altitude

THE chalet holiday, that peculiarly British house party on the ski slopes, is so durable that not only is there barely an Alpine valley without chalets, but North America is increasingly being asked to adapt to their charms.

Canadians have yet to make their minds up about chalet culture, and residents of Whistler, in British Columbia, are considering a referendum on whether to allow them.

However, on Blueberry Hill, a strip of million-dollar homes facing Whistler Mountain, a couple have leased their opulent home to the oldest established North American tour operator, Ski the American Dream, this winter.

Heron Chalet, with its chef Jean-Louis Matisse, offers true millionaire living, including a chauffeured minibus to and from the ski slopes each day. What no one is yet sure about is what the neighbours in this quiet road will make of having a British chalet party in their midst — especially when the two hot-tubs are bubbling on the balcony.

Alan Reed, who founded Ski the American Dream 20 years ago, said: "Our average client spends £1,100 on a ten or 11-night holiday and we reckon they get better value for money in North America than anywhere else."

Operators such as American Dream are now confident that there

is enough British interest in North America for them to risk leasing a property and hiring staff for the entire season.

As the biggest skiing area in North America, with two mountains each with a 5,000ft vertical drop skiable under one ticket, Whistler and Blackcomb are difficult to beat. The

FACT FILE

■ Graham Duffill travelled to Whistler and Breckenridge with Ski the American Dream (£181-£52,120). In January it offers Heron Chalet in Whistler from £109 per week, £945 for two weeks, including direct scheduled flights to Vancouver. Graham Duffill flew with Canadian Airlines (0345 60767).

■ Ski the American Dream's luxury chalets in Breckenridge are available for a week in January from £175 (Broken Lance Lodge and Kokopelli) and from £699 (Chalet Snowshoe), including scheduled flights.

only major drawback is that lifts close at 8pm in the early season and 5.30pm later.

When it is light until 8pm, it is deeply frustrating to know you have time for only two runs after lunch, but Canada is heavily unisoned, and to run the resort until 8pm would require two shifts of workers. Committed skiers would be happier in America, where lifts operate on times similar to European resorts.

In Breckenridge, the American mecca for British skiers, American Dream sells the services of two enterprising Brits who lease three luxury chalets. James Shingles, 27, a BASI qualified ski instructor, and ex-Army engineer Paul Quigley, 33, hire American chefs to cook for clients in their neighbouring chalets, Broken Lance Lodge and Kokopelli Lodge.

The standard, especially of cooking, is high. The location is just a bit too far out of town to be convenient, but James and Paul will make one run down the slopes in the mini-bus in the morning and pick up skiers at the end of the day.

Each week they will also take clients for a day's skiing in Keystone, 40 minutes' drive away, or Vail and Beaver Creek, 45 minutes away. With Arapahoe Basin making a fifth resort, America's best skiing is available within an hour of Breckenridge.

GRAHAM DUFFILL

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In fireside après-ski conver-



The ski train is convenient if you live in the south

Eurostar to the slopes

Chris Gill takes the train and reaches the Alps in eight hours

RAIL travel was one of the foundation stones of the ski holiday business. And with the launch of Eurostar's weekly service from Waterloo to the heart of the French Alps, rail enthusiasts may like to think that it is also going to form the basis of our winter holidays in the future.

When the oil runs out, I guess it will. Until then, its appeal may be rather specialised.

The service leaves Waterloo at 8.57am on Saturdays and takes 7hr 44min to reach Moûtiers (for Courchevel and Méribel), and a further 45 minutes to reach Bourg-Saint-Maurice (for Les Arcs and Val d'Isère). The return service leaves the Alps on Saturday mornings, arriving back in Waterloo as little as 20 minutes before departure.

Passengers aboard last Saturday's inaugural trip who lived in south London, or near Ashford in Kent, where the train stops, told me they welcomed the service and found it particularly convenient. In the buffet car, lubricated by a can or two of Stella Artois at £1.85 each, Gareth Silcox of Barnes, south west London, summed up the reactions of his fellow travellers with admirable clarity: "Excellent," apart from the catering. "He was

IN THE KNOW ON THE SNOW



THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

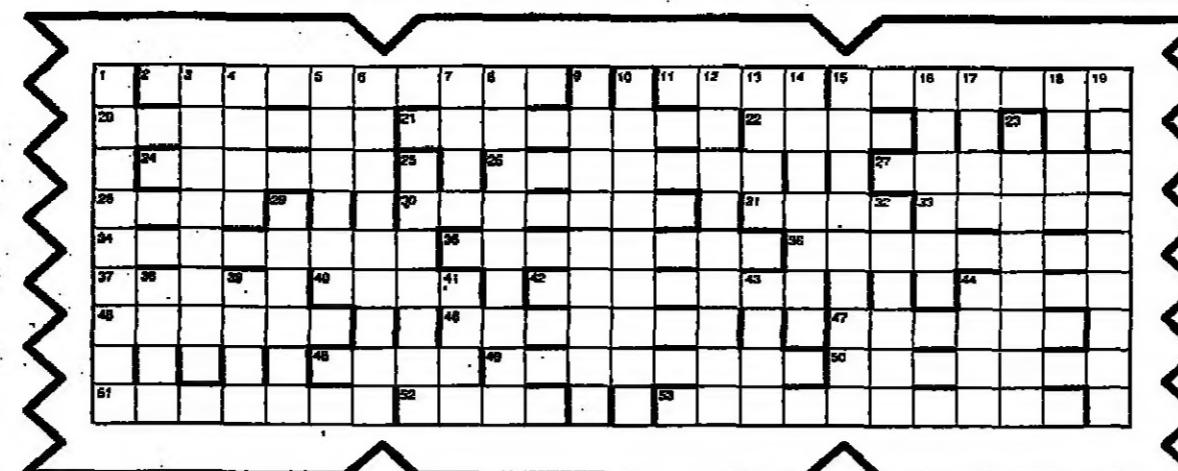
No 3441: A Christmas Puzzle by Smokey



Win a jeroboam of Moët & Chandon champagne in our festive Listener crossword competition. The closing date is January 15, 1998. Entries to: Christmas Listener Crossword, 63 Green Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6HE. The names of the winners will be published on January 17.

CLUES are of two sorts: 34 clues lead to answers which contain a superfluous letter alluded to in subsidiary clue indications and always appearing in a checked position in the grid. From the answer to the other 20 clues, a letter should be omitted wherever it occurs. Definitions refer to the full answer, whereas the subsidiary indication refers to the grid entry. Taken in clue order, the 34 extra letters spell out a question and the 20 omitted letters spell out a cryptic clue. Both lead to the same answer, which will enable the puzzle to be completed. Numbers indicate the lengths of corresponding lights. Chambers (1993) is recommended, but does not give a feminine form, nor two proper names.

Across:
 2 Have no supply of beef after onset of BSÉ: disheartened cook's grouse (10)
 11 Young devil gets one million on credit (4)
 15 Divine presence coils round, enveloping male (7)
 20 Hammer home, as it were, to old genii, including royal (7)
 21 Group that is seen on motor-bike heading off (8)
 22 Irish seven days on, weary (4)
 24 Who might serve ingredients of crêpe at end of 'roe'? (6)
 26 Large feline child-hater? The reverse (7)
 27 Fast runners, perhaps, going round Illinois (6)
 28 Popular song, No. 5 in charts (4)
 30 Faction member, one's advanced capital (7)
 31 Opening in party (4)
 33 Cease giving school group work (5)
 34 Famous personality turning round corner following greetings (8, 2 words)
 36 Part of baby's bottle I found about five o'clock? (8)
 37 Middle part of carol by soprano lacking substance, performed in a certain way (3)
 40 Judge East has somewhere to sit (on boat)? (4)
 42 Cake Charlie baked (7)



Down:
 1 Striker, mostly old one, outwardly showing signs of scurvy (9)
 3 Spy nuts put into f-fruit puree served up, and chops (8, 2 words)
 4 High voice? Allocate odd parts only (4)
 5 King, alone standing up to embrace Queen, dances (6)
 6 Former athlete, note, training with American contemporary (9)
 7 Eastern currency, formerly enough for circulation (4)

8 Lid of coffin managed to be fitted into hearse? Here's some funeral music (9)
 9 Cordial, cheeky sort entertaining pervert (9)
 10 Having no fancy minstrel music of yore, yell out (9)
 12 Within a mile, see seeds of corn and a fern genus (9)
 13 Greeting twice that's affected (4)
 14 It'll be replaced by professional at start of opening piece.
 without delay (7)
 15 Indian teacher goes round dilapidated shed, a product of his country (9)
 16 Recorder gets protection with thanks (6)
 17 This sultite is later smashed in Strike Alley (4)
 18 Start of a geological period (4)
 19 Straight struggle involving past figure (9)
 23 Capture ancient symbol of wood (8)
 25 US writer featured in song, followed by a dance (7)
 29 Females gathering in lots of dosh? (6)
 32 Antarctic explorer, one with toes unaffected if below zero? (6)
 38 Fashion newspaper (4)
 39 The case of the Steamship Four (4)
 41 Be upstanding, introducing European Community musician (4)
 43 H-help for a deeply religious sort (4)
 44 Diocese is where you'll find some of these sermonisers (4)

The solution and notes for No 3438 is on page 2

CHESS

by Raymond Keene

LAST week I promised a review of the latest text on the sharp Dragon variation of the Sicilian Defence. This has always been a great favourite with aggressive players such as Britain's Tony Miles, and Kasparov himself uncorked it as his secret weapon in the 1995 World Championship match.

If you can master its intricacies from either side you will certainly reap a rich reward in extra points scored. There is no more extensive guide than *The Complete Dragon* by Gufeld and Svetko (Batsford, £17.99). However, to extract the full message readers must be prepared to absorb no fewer than 352 pages of complex variations and subvariations, further complicated by huge transpositional possibilities. This week's game shows how effective the Dragon was in Kasparov's hands when his challenger in the World Championship was caught by surprise.

White: Viswanathan Anand; **Black:** Garry Kasparov; **World Championship, New York 1995**

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6
 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 g6

Since Kasparov had no recorded tournament game with the Dragon, Anand cannot have expected it and certainly did not prepare against it. The Dragon, by the way, derives its name from a fanciful resemblance between Black's king-side and centre pawn structure and that of the shape of the mythical beast.

6 Be3Bg7 7 f3 0-0
 8 Qd2 Ne5 9 Bc4 Bd7
 10 0-0 Ne5 11 Bb3 Rb8

The Dragon theme is clear. The players castle on opposite sides and will proceed to hack against each other's kings.

12 h4 h5

A move favoured by Grandmasters Soltis, Mestel and Miles, the idea being to block White's attack in its tracks. Kasparov said after the game that if White cannot engineer g4, his attack is going nowhere.

13 Kb1 Ne4 14 Bxe4 Rxe4
 15 Nde2 b5 16 Bf6 Qa5

As Gufeld and Svetko point out in their book, Black can now meet 17 Nbd5 with 17... Qxd2 18 Nxe7+ Kh7 19 Bxd2 Nx e4 as a neat tactical trick, ensuring active counterplay.

17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Nh4

This extraordinary tactic in a simplified position leaves Black two clear pawns ahead after either 32 Kxb4 Rxd2 or 32 Rxc2 Rb3+ 33 Ka2 Re3+ 34 Kb2 Rxe1.

White resigns

The right move was to play the immediate 28 Nxe7 when the following variation is forced: 28... Re8 29 Nds Bxd5 30 ab4 31 ab4 Rb4 32 Rxd5 Rxd4+ 33 Kc1 34 Rxd5 fe4+ 35 Kd2 when a draw is more or less unavoidable.

28... ab4 29 ab4 Rxe4 30 Nbe7?

This move is over-optimistic. Anand overlooks the trick that Kasparov had prepared long in advance. He was obliged to play 30 Nxe7 when 30... Rxd4+ 31 Kc1 Ba2 32 Rxd6 Rb1+ 33 Kd2 Rxc2+ 34 Kxc2 Rxe1 leaves Black with what winning chances there are, but this was far preferable to the text.

30... Rxd4+ 31 Kc1 Rxe1

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This move is over-optimistic. Anand overlooks the trick that Kasparov had prepared long in advance. He was obliged to play 30 Nxe7 when 30... Rxd4+ 31 Kc1 Ba2 32 Rxd6 Rb1+ 33 Kd2 Rxc2+ 34 Kxc2 Rxe1 leaves Black with what winning chances there are, but this was far preferable to the text.

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This extraordinary tactic in a simplified position leaves Black two clear pawns ahead after either 32 Kxb4 Rxd2 or 32 Rxc2 Rb3+ 33 Ka2 Re3+ 34 Kb2 Rxe1.

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MODERN MANNERS
by John Morgan

Send your queries to Morgan's Modern Manners, The Times, Weekend, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

Q My 80-year-old mother (very composure) likes to play word games (as we all do). My mother likes winning (who doesn't?), but lately she will actually, barefacedly cheat. We had always enjoyed our word-game evenings, and cheating would have been unthinkable. She is not the sort you could easily confront with this. How can we clean up her game? Before Christmas? — Darrel S. Bootle, Cambridge.

A Use flattery, first to lower your mother's defences and then go in for the kill. Next time you get together to play a game ask her: "I think some of us are getting rather confused about the rules, perhaps you could take us through them?" Then, when she starts to cheat, exclaim: "But Mummy, I thought you said that one only gets extra points if the word has four syllables?" Although she might not be shamed into submission, she should realise that she has been outflanked by cunning.

Q How does one discover whether one's wedding present arrived safely if there is no letter of thanks received? I don't want to ask the bride's mother, but we would like to know that the bride and groom received our present sent in September 1996. — Name and address withheld.

A Make the most of that useful little seasonal missive, the Christmas card, to find out whether your present ever arrived. Just write: "We hope our wedding present reached you both safely, and that you like it." This polite reminder of their rudeness should ensure a grizzling reply by return of post. If not, I suggest you excuse this couple not just from your Christmas card list but from your present list, too.

Q Apropos hats at funerals, could you comment on the appropriateness of middle-aged female mourners flashing their pins? The Spencer clan have lost the only member of that illustrious family who could show a leg to advantage. Similarly, female royal legs (and for all I know, male ones too) are better imagined than seen. — Derek Brooks, Cranleigh, Surrey.

A I quite agree. Your letter reminds me of the recent funeral of an Australian rock musician where there was an excessive amount of woeful flesh on show. Such displays are inappropriate because they juxtapose two quite different and conflicting human activities: grieving and sexual display. Most people feel uncomfortable with this unhappy combination, and thus mourners of both sexes should stick to sober dress at funerals, not just out of respect for the dead, but also mindful of the sensibilities of the living.

•John Morgan is Associate Editor of GQ



Q Apropos guests and laundry (Weekend, Saturday November 29th): Is it acceptable, after nightmare journey of traffic jams, to demonstrate on a map an alternative route home for the guest on arrival, or should it be delayed? If the latter, could it be construed as a hint to leave? — Dr James Pilpel, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

A Mindful that the first rule of hospitality is to make your guest feel welcome immediately, I would say: "Oh, poor you, the motorway can be murder. Do remind me to go through the back route with you before you leave." Then offer him a drink.

Q With Christmas almost upon us again we are besieged by friends trying to sell us charity Christmas cards and asking us to donate to their various causes. We already give to two charities and have limited means. How can we politely refuse these demands? — Mrs N. Derwentwater, Perthshire.

A Charities are extremely clever at utilising the network marketing approach to maximise their gains, particularly at Christmas. This being said, good manners do not require the "good will to all men" cliché to be taken too far. Next time you are confronted by a well-meaning but pushy friend just say: "I think it is absolutely brilliant that so many of our friends are involved in charity work (Davina is working for Save the Centipede Appeal this Christmas!). We are not nearly so organised so we just give all our donations to our regular two charities. In this way we feel we are making generous contributions to specific projects rather than spreading ourselves too thinly."

Q As a young man I understood that when wearing evening dress and white tie, the jacket should never show the white of the waistcoat when you lifted your arm. Nowadays I see eminent politicians, concert soloists and the like showing vast expanses of white waistcoat. Was I wrongly informed? — B.M. Rawlinson, Leatherhead, Surrey.

A You were quite correctly informed. However, as few men actually possess their own tail coats nowadays many hire ill-fitting sets of evening clothes when they need them. Also, some men mistakenly choose to wear straight-topped trousers rather than the traditional high-waisted brace variety, and thus need longer waistcoats. But let's not gripe too much about such minutiae, and simply be grateful instead that modern men still choose to wear this most flattering form of dress.

•John Morgan is Associate Editor of GQ

ACROSS

- It's not clear the time is ripe for these features of last season (5,3,6,12)
- Twine easily made to overlap, so as to bind (11)
- Suffering from exhaustion, appeal is rejected — bloody characteristic (9)
- Entrance with impudence (5)
- Get into argument, all about symbol of kind hiding in tree (7)
- Malicious type's faulty will dished heirs (3-6)
- Endless drama to secure job assignment (9)
- Diver's union blocking an entrance to seaport (9)
- Go to inspect deceased at back of Paddington home — a doctor's being brought in (11)
- Virgil's works can be staged with music (5)
- Cloth fibres and similar (6)
- Two calls for quiet work — stop work altogether (4,2,4)
- Taken to court about pass being held up (9)
- Planned to get one set of books finished (8)
- Row at work, where one has to make up (8,4)
- Italian poet relaxed in this way? (5)
- Military leader seems original in manoeuvres (13)
- Wood used in popular chair (5)
- Supporter of refreshments makes milk supplier buzz (3,4)
- Two-timer said to be a fast runner (7)
- Almost intoxicated, offered French confection (5)
- Echoing call to reform, applying scientific principles (13)
- Composer unaffected by rejection (5)
- Low humour from this reactionary officer (7,5)
- Book I loaned out from library (6)
- Mutuality almost having collapsed, start to murmur threat (9)
- Made net safe, replacing part sent back — secure again (10)
- Solve Gordius's problem? Doubtly negative, we hear (6)
- Fine weather holds appeal for girl (5)
- Ruthless as Richard III? (4-7)
- Extremes of temper — instinctive not to become exceptionally wounding (9)
- One's prepared to avoid a certain amount of pain (9)
- He'll plan to help you to make your pile (9)
- One turning back to see leader abandoning Italian king (7)
- Announcer once expressing grief? (5)
- Brew is steamed in cup (9)
- Success with tree measure of work he put in with new shrub (11)
- Four hussars, say, presented thus to Gilbert's Captain (5,6,3,5,4)

DOWN

- Being in overall charge of TV quiz (13)
- Writer can be a bit of a bore (7)
- In extremely scary country, policeman in stress taken off the ring (11)
- Feature of Christmas tree at end of Christmas. It's superfluous (8)
- Mum's the word for the leaders of this society (10)
- True mixture of metals with aluminium replaced (5)
- Deviant result published — inaccurate statement, right? (7)
- Ring question there's no need to ask — once you provided the answer (3,4,4,5)
- Stint done in insufficiently flexible way (11)
- Players use one article and another in turns (9)
- Where one goes back, with raised leg (7)
- Union has capital in Switzerland — admitting nothing is most important (6,3)
- Contract amounting to blackmail? (7)
- Horse planned to shy, being skittish (8,4)
- Kelvin shortly identified this metal (9)
- Affect gravity to present a more rounded figure (3,2,6)
- Artist in right old mess over two girls (5,5,9)
- Work till you drop, in two ways (5,5)
- Entertainment one may be frantic to be driven to (11)
- Saint mission — no mouse would volunteer to do it (4,3,3)
- In sweet cover, hard Chinese book (1,5)
- Hint about wife's ring (5)
- Woman that is left about to cry (6)
- One going round in car, and able to offer a lift (5)
- The French like to tear round and give advice (9)
- What should be considered, following pomp in ceremony (12)
- Fingernail cut badly — there are a few cracked here (7,6)
- Prime Minister on holiday — that's a blow (5-6)
- Executive role with real meaning, perhaps (4,7)
- Shut in, having a drink on a small scale (10)
- People, I agree sadly, can be a lot of animals (8)
- Town wants extra bank right away (9)
- Islanders have combatant forces in centre of operations (8)
- After interval, I call for quiet, making speech abroad (7)
- Hard and sharp-sounding, being Jewish (7)
- Go sick, wanting nurse round — one comes at last (4,3)
- Missed ripped round stern of ship — finish! (7)
- Man picked winners, selecting five in a row (5)



Peter Brookes



WORD WATCHING

By Philip Howard

KANKEDORT
a. A South African antelope
b. A sailing-barge
c. A problem

MUINEIRA

a. Spanish armoury
b. A collection box
c. Song and dance

VIOLON D'INGRES

a. A pastime
b. A lyre
c. The way-in

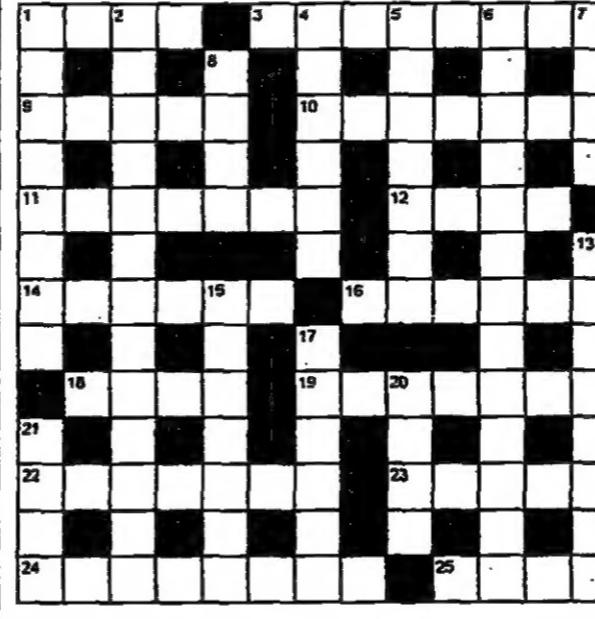
LIMBATION

a. Bordering
b. Arthritis
c. Exercise

Answers on page 16

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 1282



ACROSS

- To sieve, sort (4)
- A dog; part of Canada (8)
- Creepy (5)
- Obsessed person (7)
- A dog; indication (7)
- Scot. town; part of candle (4)
- Fr. writer on eg US democracy (2,1)
- Wrinkle; loose scrum (6)
- Dig (field); (the) Great Bear (6)
- Improvised music (4)
- George I's Elector (7)
- First letter (7)
- Casole, du Pre's instrument (5)
- Holliness (8)
- Peruse, study (4)
- Abashed (8)

SOLUTION TO NO 1281
ACROSS: 1 Peccadillo 9 Amiable 10 Movie 11 Sulk 12 Spinner 14 Narrow 15 Hectic 16 Mischievous 20 Brim 22 April 23 Ovation 24 Separatrix 25 Down: 2 Elba 3 Creepy 4 Demented 5 Lovat 6 One-track mind 7 Ways and means 8 Pillar 13 Potholer 16 Torpid 17 Revolt 19 Strap 21 Pass

TWO BRAINS

WILLIAM Klein in Rhode Island in 1982, when aged 70, multiplied two five-digit numbers mentally in 42 seconds. Try it for yourself before resorting to the calculator. These two numbers he was randomly given were: 57625 x 1348

Question 1:
If FRIDAY = 63 and SUNDAY = 84, what day = 100?

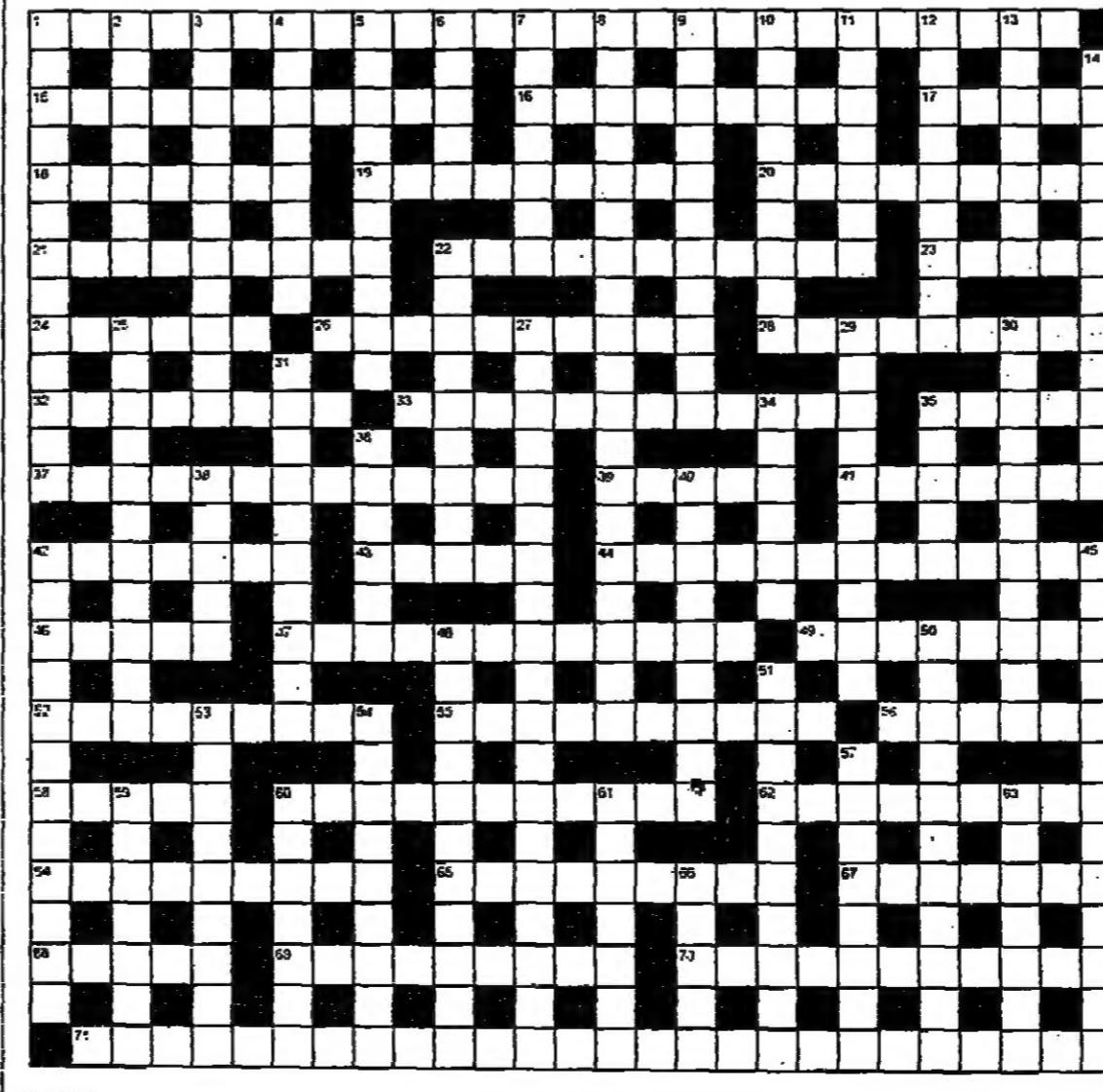
Question 2:
Can you think of people's names which answer these clues?
a) Highly coloured variety of quartz?
b) Evergreen: emblem of love?
c) Plant of the mint family?
d) French gold coin?

If you would like a Mensa home test, or information, call 01902 772771 or write to Mensa, FREEPOST, Wolverhampton WV2 1BR.
Answers on page 21 R.K.

CHRISTMAS JUMBO CROSSWORD 141



Win a Methuselah of Moët & Chandon champagne and an Alfred Dunhill AD2000. The closing date is January 15, 1998. Send entries to: Christmas Jumbo Crossword, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Winners will be published on January 17.



NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
POSTCODE _____

TIMES TWO

Christmas Jumbo

There are no prizes for this crossword. The answers will be published on December 30.

- ACROSS**
- "We are —" (insubstantial) (*Prospero*) (4,5,2,6,3,4,2)
 - Cane product; rue starving (*anag.*) (6,5)
 - Contamination (9)
 - Cracking (3,2); fight (3-2)
 - Classical (7)
 - Departure from norm (9)
 - "Wild West" holiday centre (4,5)
 - Second-highest civilian bravery award (6,5)
 - At right angles to ship's length (5)
 - Most likely to happen (4-2)
 - Architectural feature (*anag.*) (10)
 - Cardinal Louis XIII's minister (9)
 - Pretender (8)
 - Out of control (12)
 - TV, press, etc (5)
 - One with solid body (4-6,3)
 - Having come up (5)
 - Highly coloured person (7)
 - Ancient war vehicle (7)
 - Vision view (5)
 - Backwards (ship) (5,8)
 - Away; in reserve (5)
 - Stern questioner (2)
 - Had inside (9)
 - Melody makers (10)
 - Loving touch (6)
 - Fr. town; a heavy Burgundy (5)
 - Lovers of Russia (11)
 - Wife of King Edward IV (10)
 - Small cap of coffee (6)
 - Squared-stone masonry (9)
 - Morally uplifted (7)
 - Leonhard —, Swiss mathematician (5)
 - Found; educe; establishment (9)
 - Caribbean (for pirates once) (2,4,4)
 - Unmistakable (2,3,2,4,2,4)
 - Soldierly smartness (4,3,6)
 - Truth; fiction (7)
 - (Eg bank) vaults (11)
 - Blind (8)
 - National chief (10)
 - Thin piece; address (5)
 - (Baroque) accompanying instruments (7)
 - He overvalues what he has (3,3,5,5)
 - Hampshire port (11)
 - One launching new incursion (9)
 - Met-bread dog (7)
 - Believe; trust (9)
 - Silhouette (7)
 - Walking in sleep (12)
 - Movable-type pioneer (9)
 - Expulsion from state (11)
 - Stopped the show (7,4,3,5)
 - Chequered play area (10)
 - Eventually (2,3,6)
 - Paul addressee (10)
 - Sort of fruit; of republic; (6)
 - Code of inspection (3)
 - Roots of oak; town (6)
 - Newly-made (5)
 - Lives of Caesars author (9)
 - Accidental homicide (6-6)
 - Surpassing condition (13)
 - One relying on reason (11)
 - Torches; camera bulbs (11)
 - (Bread) made with all the wheat (10)
 - Plainly cooked; naked (Fr.) (2,7)
 - Indigestion (9)
 - Zomar; emperor; medicinal plant (8)
 - Cook; cook; food (7)
 - William Tell; composer (7)
 - S. Am. plainman (7)
 - Jap. Ryukyu island; US base (7)
 - Number of magazine (5)

They're for Chri
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